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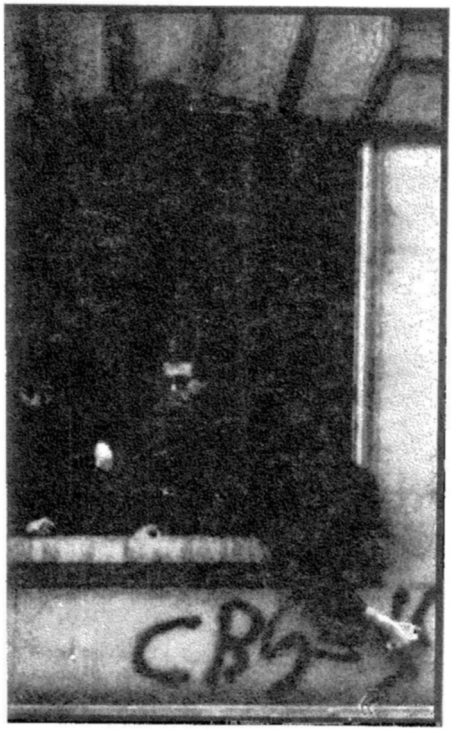

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General Editor: J. David Fisher
Published by Attic Publishing Ltd.
April 1970. Price £6

The Golden Age of Film suffered death by television, but from it has come a new age. Film is now a universal medium; an everyday tool in education and training, in industry and advertising, in government and research, and at all levels from underground to overground. The Craft of Film was written to meet this growing need for basic technical information. It covers all aspects of film-making from 8 to 70 mm, from the fundamental properties of light and sound to clearly detailed accounts of equipment, operating procedures and administration, in all departments from production office to presentation theatre. Originally published in 1969 as a series of 22 booklets, the Craft of Film won praise from film-makers of every kind. Since then, the original edition has been greatly extended and revised to form this new edition in a single comprehensive volume.

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FOREWORD

Central to this issue of *Screen* are the articles by John Trevelyan and Vicki Eves on Censorship and Violence. With the apparent hardening of police attitudes over recent months in their treatment of cinema clubs and the Home Secretary's approach to the Television Authorities about so-called 'violence' on the screen, these articles look at the grounds for censorship of the media. John Trevelyan puts the official view, advocating a liberal course as a response to public opinion. Vicki Eves lays more emphasis on research into the known effect of 'violence' on television.

There is, of course, another form to censorship, which John Trevelyan indicates is insignificant in Great Britain, namely political censorship. Perhaps the most notorious examples of this have been found in the United States, specifically during the McCarthy period. The interview which Jim Cook and Kingsley Canham carried out with Abraham Polonsky indicates that political blacklisting still exists in the USA in a more elaborate and disguised form.

Continuing *Screen's* policy of considering British Cinema from a production point of view, we are printing an interview with John Schlesinger and an article by Michael Winner. In the next issue, we are printing an interview which John Terry gave to David Spiers and part of the Kinnaird Lecture which John Terry gave to Regent Street Polytechnic.

Both the feature films which are considered by Margaret Tarratt and Suzanne Budgen are films that have received no significant consideration by writers. It is a deplorable situation that a film by Alain Resnais should take so long to reach the commercial screen in this country and that a film by as influential and major a director as Visconti, should be treated so cursorily by film journalists. A film by either of these directors is a major cinema event and we hope that these articles help to redress the balance.

Acknowledgements for Illustrations:
Rank for *Tell Them Willie Boy is Here,* 20th Century Fox for *The Games* and *Je T'Aime, Je T'Aime,* United Artists for *Midnight Cowboy,* Warner-Pathé for *Billy Liar, The Dammed, Darling, Far from the Madding Crowd.*

JOHN SCHLESINGER

interviewed by DAVID SPIERS

JS: I'm the eldest of five children and the son of a doctor, a children's specialist. We led a perfectly normal middle-class life, with a fairly disciplined upbringing to this extent – that we were encouraged, all of us, to do everything for ourselves creatively, and severely limited to the number of times we were taken to the theatre or cinema when we were children. I was given a camera at quite an early age and allowed to use the cellar as a darkroom. When I was quite young I was interested in being a magician. The first theatre I was ever taken to see was a magic show by a very famous pair of conjurers called Maskelyn and Devant, when I was about eight, and it fascinated me. When I was in the army I had my own magic act, but that got thrown to the winds. When I went to university to read English I became more and more interested in both serious drama and making films. At Oxford I collaborated on two films as a writer and co-director, photographing and editing them myself. Both were on 16 mm – one was good and one was terrible, though it got blown up to 35 mm and got some sort of commercial release.

When I left university in 1948, there was a very bad slump in the film industry. We had these two films, one of which had had incredibly good notices – Dilys Powell headed her column in the *Sunday Times* with the first film, which was called *Black Legend*, 'brains not money', and gave us the only 'rave' I've ever had from her in my life. As a result, Michael Balcon, who was then running Ealing Studios, summoned us. We had no soundtrack, we had twin turntables and commentary recorded on bands of a record and a lot of music, and we synchronized each performance with the records. Balcon summoned all his heads of departments to see this film; I can understand now that I've become a professional film-maker how difficult it must have been for them to sit through anything like it. Everybody walked out in silence, clearly disappointed – and he said: 'Thank you for showing us your amateur film.'

I decided to go for my second string, which was to be a professional actor. So for some years I kicked off in Rep, carrying a spear in *Julius Caesar* to Jan Van Eyssen's Brutus – he's now head of the British end of Columbia. I went on a tour of Australia and New Zealand, still with my 16 mm film and my records. When I was in the run of a play at the Arts, which was directed by Peter Hall – *Mourning Becomes Electra* – where I was playing literally a spit and a cough, and went on stage at 9 o'clock at night and came off at five past, I found I had a lot of time on my hands, and friends of mine said: 'Look, you were interested in films – why don't you go back and why don't you try another small film?' So I did: my agent at that time was also a keen movie buff and he and I collaborated together and did another 16 mm which was a documentary about Hyde Park called *Sunday in the Park*. It wasn't very good, but it got me some attention and I tried all the usual means of getting into various documentary units. I tried Edgar Anstey at British Transport Films, I saw Jimmy Carr of Worldwide Films, and so forth. I *got* a job with James Carr, who said: 'Well, I think I might send you up on a research job. Would you go and research a film on British cheese for the Milk Marketing Board?' I was working with Julian Spiro, who was charming to me and very helpful. Between them, Julian and Jimmy Carr had managed to wangle that I was also the assistant director on the film. I'd had *Sunday in the Park* shown on television and been put up for a producers' board and had been turned down as unsuitable material. Worldwide Films didn't seem to have more for me – I suspect because they felt I had ideas above my station. Somebody obviously had overheard me saying: 'Don't you think it would be better if . . .' one moment at the movieola, and the door was very rapidly closed. Then I managed to get a job with the *Tonight* programme on the BBC, making short films. The first film I made, which was a few minutes long about Petticoat Lane, was edited by Jack Gold; I never saw it because it was like working for a newspaper – you just made something and turned it in, and they did what they wanted with it. I did about a dozen more films for the *Tonight* programme, increasingly ambitious and increasingly feeling that I wanted to make them in my own way, and see the dubbing of them and see them right through. I've never been a believer in doing half a job. I am a perfectionist and I dislike compromise intensely. Of course, we all finally have to do it in one way or another, but I resent it.

DS: How did *Terminus* come up?

JS: *Terminus* came much later. I joined *Monitor*, which was the best year creatively I'd ever had – a marvellous team of people, very interesting films to do, longer, more ambitious films, a quarter

Schlesinger directing his actors

of an hour, twenty minutes – and finally I did two full-length three-quarter-of-an-hour ones, for the whole programme, but that came a few years afterwards. But then I left *Monitor*, because I felt I needed to have a brush with the commercial side of cinema, and I worked as a second unit director on *The Four Just Men*, which wasn't a good series but gave me the chance to do anything from car chases to directing di Sica in Rome. I got that again through Basil Appleby, who was my one-time agent who'd made *Sunday in the Park* with me and then joined Sapphire Films. I had extremely nice people to work for like Basil Dearden and Sid Cole: Sid was the producer and Basil the director for a lot of the series. There were other directors who were also making the series who wouldn't let me touch anything, but Basil Dearden taught me a great deal.

I had a very unfortunate and unhappy brush with the publicity side of films, working for Columbia doing advertising films about the making of *The Guns of Navarone*. That was a big mistake: I spent six months trying to cut together, these bits of rubbish which is what they were.

British Transport Films asked me to go up and show them some films I'd made for *Monitor*, because by that time I'd made twenty-four films for television. As a result Edgar Anstey said: 'I think you should come and make a film for me.' First of all I wanted to

make a film about Brighton – wrote it – but it never got done. Then we came up with *Terminus*. Edgar was a very good producer for me; he said what it was necessary to say in an objective way but identified himself with the project, which is in my opinion the best possible way of producing films. If you're pulling in different directions disaster results. I've been very fortunate in having good producers to work with who have been able to keep objectivity when I'm losing it. Huw Wheldon, when he was producing *Monitor*, was an extremely good producer for me. He would see an assembly of a film I'd made and make notes on an envelope about how perhaps it should be altered to its improvement, and he was invariably right. Edgar was next, then Joseph Janni, and recently Jerry Hellman. Janni had seen one of my early *Monitor* films as well as *Terminus* and *The Class*, which was the last film I made for the BBC, about drama students and the Central School. I thought it was a good film because we achieved what we set out to do Janni said: 'I wish I could take the risk for you to direct *A Kind of Loving*. I'll have to think about it.' I went away on a winter sports holiday, read *A Kind of Loving* and wrote him a card saying: 'I'm desperate to do this – it would be marvellous. I really feel I could.' They were worried because I'd never directed actors and wanted me to direct an Edgar Wallace film first. I said: 'No', thinking it would be a disaster because I could show no individuality with a film like that or working in those conditions. So they said: 'Would you do an artist's test?' Well, I knew that the artist's test was as much mine as his, and in fact it was for Tom Courtenay in *Billy Liar*, which Joe Janni had also acquired. I did it and got the job of doing *A Kind of Loving*. Because *A Kind of Loving* was a commercial success and, I think, a good film – my best, I think, until *Midnight Cowboy* – I was enabled to go on from there.

DS: Why were you attracted by *A Kind of Loving*?

JS: I thought it was a very true story about love. I thought it observed human beings and their emotions very beautifully. It wasn't exactly new. Woodfall had been in existence for a long time – it wasn't new to observe the social scene truthfully. The climate was ready for the film, and I think it still holds up to examination now.

DS: Where did you find your actors like Alan Bates and June Ritchie?

JS: Alan Bates had done *The Caretaker* and he's been in the film *The Entertainer* as well as playing Cliff in *Look Back in Anger*. June Ritchie was just out of drama school – she'd never done anything. I can't remember whether she was just somebody who was brought in to an interview by Miriam Brickman, who's cast all my

A *Billy Liar* fantasy

films over here. We turned her down at first because, I think, her face was too fat – she'd just been to the dentist. But her persistent agent sent her back. So we decided to test her along with several others including Barbara Ferris, and June got the part. It was correct casting.

DS: Was it a very expensive film?

JS: No. *A Kind of Loving* was, by present-day standards, a very cheap film. It cost about £180,000.

DS: *Billy Liar*?

JS: We went straight ahead with *Billy Liar*, which cost about £230,000 and has never, I'm told, made its money, which I find hard to believe.

DS: Did you have a lot of control over the actors or were you carefully watched and supervised by the producers?

JS: Joe Janni's great forte as a producer is that he's marvellous at the pre-production stage. He's very good at keeping an objective eye on what's going on while you're making the film. He's bored stiff standing around on the set watching you do everything. I suppose once or twice he said as he was watching a scene in *A Kind of Loving*: 'Don't you think they should play it faster?' I said, 'Well, if you think we should, let's try a take faster.' I've always felt that

I've had creative control, and it's been a good collaboration for me working with him.

DS: What about the differences between the content of the film and the original book?

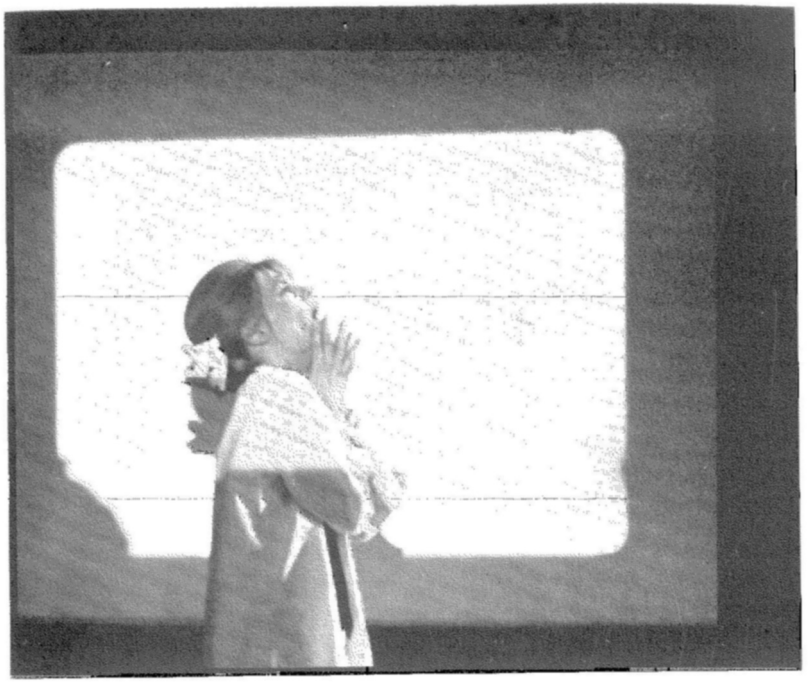
JS: There was a marvellous transfusion scene in the book. I think if I were adapting the book now I'd come into it at the start, but I was the hired director on that, coming in after the first draft of the script had been written. Now I always get in on the ground level if I can. You've got to decide why it it is that you want to do an adaptation, what it is in the theme, the characters or just the story that attracts you. I never wanted to take a play and just photograph it, like the sort of thing they did with *Barefoot in the Park*, which seemed to me just a rather badly photographed play, though it worked in the theatre very well.

DS: Coming to *Darling*, where did the idea originally come from?

JS: The idea of *Darling* came, funnily enough, out of a conversation with Godfrey Winn. I was asking him to be in *Billy Liar*, to play himself in the opening, and over lunch we were discussing possible ideas. He told me about some model girl who'd been kept by a syndicate of men who formed a limited company and bought a flat for her and who all had access to her. I rather wish we'd done that story now. We started work loosely from that sort of idea, but it changed a great deal as we worked. Frederick Raphael and I took the idea to Joe and after a number of drafts we finally had one that seemed right.

DS: Did you have any difficulty in getting the film accepted?

JS: Nobody wanted to back it. It was turned down right, left and centre. People thought the girl was unsympathetic. 'Immoral' was Walter Reed's word as far as I can remember. Columbia turned it down as unsavoury. I was financed by Nat Cohen and Joe Janni out of his own pocket. Nobody wanted Julie Christie: I remember going to America at that time to read her in the part. She was playing with the Royal Shakespeare Company on tour and I spent several days with her reading through the script and thought, 'Yes, she could do it.' She had just been in *Billy Liar* before that and we decided that we'd go with her if we could find some men to play the smaller parts opposite her. I remember trying to get Paul Newman. Originally, Freddy had written the part of Robert for an American, a sort of itinerant American journalist who felt that he belonged in Europe rather than in America. Newman was very polite and turned it down. We even asked Cliff Robertson to play it before we changed the nationality to cast Dirk Bogarde.



Julie Christie in *Darling*

DS: Was *Darling* a successful film financially?

JS: Well, there's a great deal of mystery shrouding the success of *Darling* commercially. I'm sure it was a commercial success, but because it was under-budgeted we made one or two mistakes and the whole opening of the film had to be reshot. There was a bit of panic at the British end because we were running over budget and it was imperative that we made an American sale. The people who saw it first were MGM, who expressed interest but said they couldn't possibly exhibit such a frank and candid film without getting into trouble, but Joe Levine stepped in and, I think, knew exactly what a good wicket he was on. However, the result is shrouded in mystery.

DS: Were you pleased with the film?

JS: At the time I was pleased. I look back on it and I think it is my least good film. I enjoyed making it more than any other, but it doesn't stand the test of time.

DS: In my opinion the main theme of your films is that of escape – the difficulty of a character getting out of his environment and changing his way of life. Could you say something about this?

JS: I think it's one that's part of my own life. It's slightly inverted in

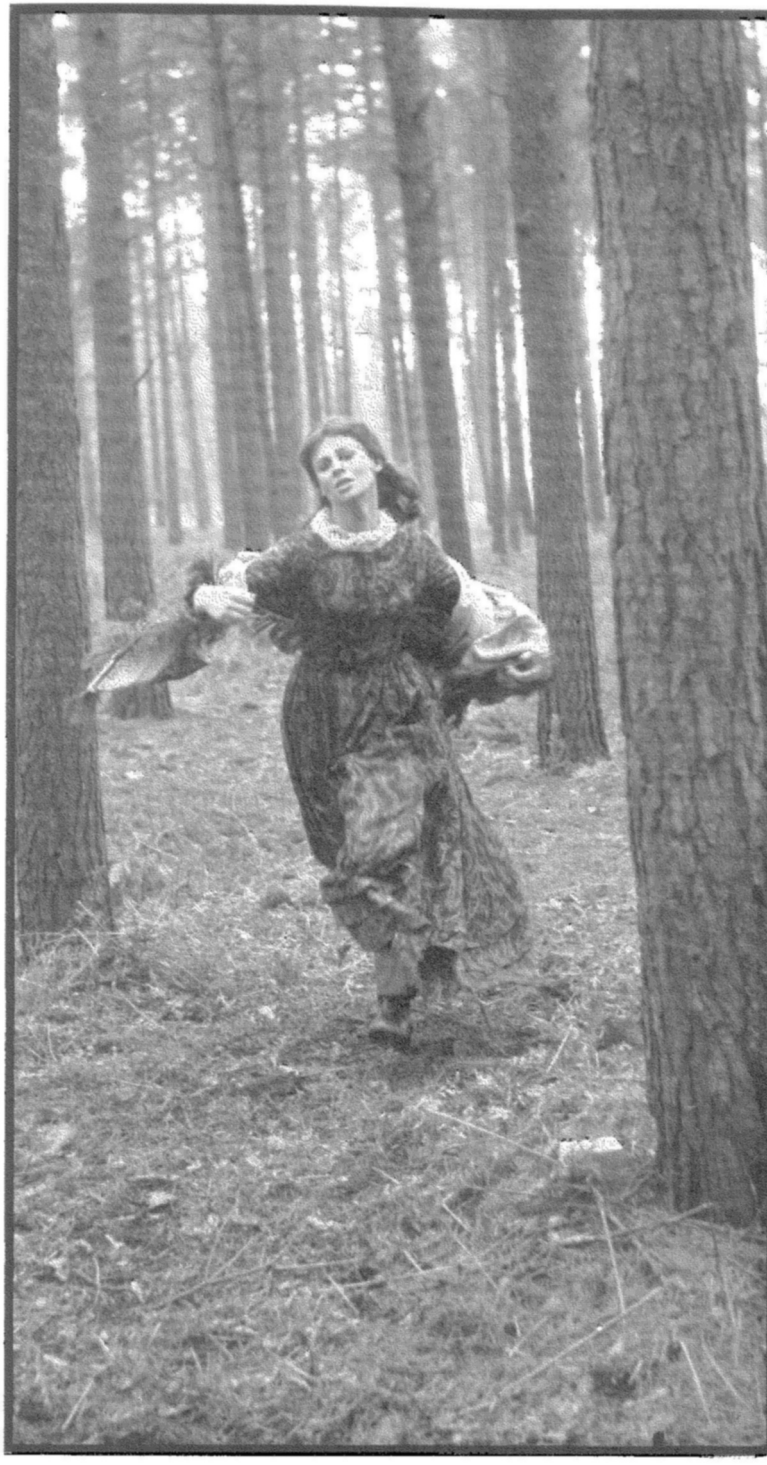
Darling because there's a case of a girl who's never able to settle for anything because she thinks there's something better round the next corner. In *Midnight Cowboy* there's the theme of a fantasy life which has been created by a simple-minded boy living in America and working in a lousy job. The thing that he thinks he's good at is making love, and it's this fantasy that carries him along until it's stripped away and he finds the truth and reality of his own situation. It continues to be something that I'm interested in – escape from the real self into a fantasy world, or the means by which one compromises and accepts what one has got, which is invariably second best.

DS: Where did the idea come from to make *Far from the Madding Crowd*?

JS: *Far from the Madding Crowd* came whilst Joe and I, and Jim Clark, the editor of *Darling*, were sitting day after day doing the final dub on *Darling*. And Jim, I think it was, said: 'I wish someone would do *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: it would make a beautiful film.' As we were confronted day after day, reel after reel, with the questionable lives these people were leading, we said: 'Isn't it time we went back to something more romantic, and about another age when people were buttoned up to the necks?' Out of that discussion came the idea of reading *Madding Crowd*. I read the book on the way back from the incredibly successful opening of *Darling* in America, where it's the only place in the world to have a success and it's the last place to have a failure. We'd all been reading it, Joe, Freddy and I, and we decided to do it with Julie Christie very firmly in mind. She was, I think, most unfairly attacked because they said: 'Oh, she's a modern girl', but what else after all at that time was Bathsheba but a modern girl?

DS: What was the budget?

JS: Four million dollars. It had a lot of financial success here and absolutely none anywhere else. It was a disaster in America. I just don't think they got on to the wavelength and it was my biggest disappointment so far, because I felt really proud of that film. I know there were elements that didn't work, but I thought it had a lot that was going for it. We all felt the whole evocation of that period of rural life in England was marvellous. We all thought it was high time we got away from swinging London and looked at these really beautiful people – these people sitting round singing their songs, their harvest suppers, and coping with what life meted out to them. This is why the rather black mood of Hardy appeals to me – how he would strike a character down and leave the pieces to gather themselves up and carry on. Logistically, it was by far the most difficult film I've ever tackled – it's put me off epic films



Julie Christie as Bathsheba Everdene

because every other day we seemed to have a crowd scene to cope with.

DS: How did you come to make *Midnight Cowboy*?

JS: Whatever I'm making at the moment, there's always another one in some stage of preparation. Whilst *Far from the Madding Crowd* was under way, I was working with Freddy Raphael on a screenplay of *A Severed Head*, which, for a variety of reasons, I never ended up doing, but at that time I read *Midnight Cowboy* and thought it would make a marvellous film. I suggested it to Joe Janni, who said it wasn't his scene and he didn't think he wanted to make it – couldn't we adapt it to take place in England? So we didn't proceed together. As often happens in this business there are moral commitments that one feels to other people, people that perhaps have asked you to do something and you've said 'Yes' to begin with and 'No' afterwards. I had made one such commitment, just after *Billy Liar*, to a young American producer, Jerry Hellman. We met and discussed the possibility of doing *Midnight Cowboy*. We had a script started and the whole thing backed by United Artists, who'd already said several times: 'You know, if you've got something you want to make, come to us.' We knew it was a difficult script to lick, and indeed the first writer who worked on it produced two scripts, neither of which were shootable. Jerry Hellman, who was living in Hollywood at that time, found another writer I'd never heard of, named Waldo Salt. He had written fifty pages of an enormous original script about a draft dodger, apart from the huge body of work that he'd done in Hollywood for years, until the McCarthy era, when he was politically out. He had had to work under an assumed name on all sorts of different projects. We were so impressed with this script about a draft dodger that we decided to start the whole thing again. This was the situation when I arrived in America with *Madding Crowd* for its series of disastrous openings. Nobody wanted me overmuch after that: I was what's known as a cold property. I think Jack Lemmon, bless him, offered me a job doing *April Fools*, but I was determined to make *Midnight Cowboy* and decided to stay in Hollywood, to work on the script with Waldo Salt and Jerry Hellman. Because of the nature of the subject, UA were giving us no front money at all to prepare the script, so we were literally working on spec. All of us got more and more enthusiastic and involved with the project as it was going ahead – it was the best collaboration I've ever had on a film. United Artists are a distributing company who really do believe in giving you freedom once they've committed themselves to a project. They all said: 'Yes, let's give them their head.' I must confess, they are a good company to work for in this respect, and you also

know that if they are behind the picture and like it, they are going to give it the most incredible send-off with a very carefully prepared advertising campaign with which, for the first time, I felt involved as an equal partner. And, because I was co-producing in a sense with Hellman, we had total artistic control.

It was based on a $1 million budget. When we'd written the script and knew it was going to be more complicated, and had it budgeted, it was about $2,500,000, and to feel comfortable I think we asked for $2,800,000, but we didn't get it. It had to be reduced considerably to $2,100,000 or $2,200,000 and in fact the whole picture ended up by costing just over $3 million.

DS: Were there any major arguments when the figure went up?

JS: There were major arguments, yes. There weren't, funnily enough, once we'd started, or if there were they never came to my ears. The costs did rise considerably during the shooting because it became more and more complicated. I hated a lot of the things that went on in the unit. I felt it was full of graft, that there were people who were bringing their own people and equipment in and robbing the production. There was a lack of real enthusiasm from certain quarters, which you don't find in a really good British unit. On *Madding Crowd* for six months we'd been working as a community really, in Dorset, with people who were totally committed to what they were doing. But to find that camera operators and so forth wanted to be paid overtime to come and see rushes depressed me, and finally angered me considerably, because I didn't think their work was of a high enough standard to warrant that kind of high-handed attitude. I don't say that it's like that all through. For instance, I had a designer and a group of craftsmen working with him who were absolutely committed to the film and did do a really beautiful job. But in other areas I think we fell badly short and therefore it was for me a difficult and unhappy experience, except with the actors, who were very good to work with.

DS: Who chose Dustin Hoffman? Was that your choice or was it part of the deal?

JS: No, it wasn't part of the deal at all. It was before *The Graduate* had come out. Dustin Hoffman was being bandied around, and Jerry had seen him off Broadway doing various character parts. I met him and we walked around Times Square and Forty-second Street and he took me to some of the haunts that he knows and he blended in so incredibly that the Benjamin from *The Graduate* totally disappeared. He begged me to see a television piece of his later that week. I managed to see it but I couldn't hear it because the sound had broken down. In this piece he played a character

part, and he looked so extraordinary that it convinced me immediately. I offered him the role there and then.

DS: Are you satisfied with the film artistically?

JS: Oh, I think that's an impossible question to answer. A hundred per cent, never. I think it works. People obviously could carp, and do, at certain things. I defend the flashbacks, which I've been accused of souping up, absolutely to the hilt. I think the flashbacks work. They're there for a purpose. Everything that's in the film is very carefully considered: it's not there just to create an effect or to be with it or anything like that.

DS: How do you feel about working in America again?

JS: I think America's a very exciting place to work in, though it wouldn't be the place that I would choose. It was like coming into a totally new world: I didn't know any of the people or who to ask for. Now, after that experience, I know who's good and who I wouldn't ever work with again. I went back to do a commercial, for instance, not so long ago in New York, and my assistant, who was the fourth that I'd worked with (the other three had been dismissed for incompetence) was a marvellous man. I asked for

Midnight Cowboy

Joe Buck and his first 'hustle'

him immediately. He had gathered together all the people who were free that I had most got on with to make our little commercials. It was great fun; I loved seeing them all again – I was enormously fond of them. I do demand absolute commitment to what people are doing: they're paid highly enough, for God's sake, and I want them to be involved. I don't want it to be just any film.

DS: What film are you working on now?

JS: I'm working on a film called *Bloody Sunday* – with an original script by Penelope Gilliat. It's another one for UA; Joe Janni is producing again. It's set in London, about a group of professional people – a doctor, played by Peter Finch, a girl who dislikes her job because she feels that it's pointless, played by Glenda Jackson, and a designer of things played by a new boy we've come up with again. Thematically, it simply poses the question: is half a loaf better than no bread to two people who are involved emotionally, not with each other, but somebody else? It's a very truthful film about people's emotions, and one that we've been working on since *Madding Crowd*.

DS: What sort of budget is it?

JS: It's fairly high by present-day standards: it's about one and a half. It needs a fairly long schedule, not because it's an involved

film, but because it needs very beautiful playing. It's not a film one can just dash off, because it will only work if the finer grading of shades of people's emotions and the subtleties of the scenes are brought out. It's got to be very carefully made, or otherwise it will be a disaster. Then I'm probably doing *Hadrian VII* for Columbia, which is a bigger, more ambitious project.

DS: How did you come up with the idea to make *Hadrian VII*?

JS: I went to see *Hadrian* at the Mermaid and was intrigued, though not entirely approving of the play. I thought it made a good evening in the theatre, but I also thought it would make a very good film. I went backstage to see Alex MacCowen afterwards, whom I admire tremendously in the part, and, just as I came away, said to somebody I was with: 'I do think that would make an awfully good film' and put in, as it were, for the job. I had an interview in New York with the producer of the play and of the film, Charles Kasher, who was interested but non-committal. It wasn't until *Cowboy* came out and was a great success that everybody said O.K. I don't know, perhaps I'm being unfair, but that's the order of events as I saw it. Once *Cowboy* was a success, everybody seemed to think: 'Oh yes, you know, if he's interested, let him do it.'

DS: We've talked about your difficulties with technicians in America. Do you use the same technicians over here?

JS: It very much depends on the film. Many of the people I've worked with have become directors. For instance, Jim Clark, who cut *Darling* and came in to supervise certain editing scenes in both *Madding Crowd* and *Cowboy*, has now, I'm glad to say, become a director, I think he's extraordinarily talented and I'm very fond of him. Again, Nick Roeg, who lit *Madding Crowd*, is now a director, I've got the same boom swinger I had on *Billy Liar* and *Darling*, and I've got the same continuity girl who's been in all the films that I've made here in one capacity or another, either as production secretary or as continuity. I like to surround myself with familiar people – it really is very comfortable and nice, though it's jolly healthy to have to get away and find your feet in a totally foreign place. I couldn't have made *Midnight Cowboy* unless I'd had to uproot myself and go and live, and look and be, in a totally different place. America is an alarming place to be for some time. It's also comfortable and convenient in many ways, more so than this country. Certain things work better, though I found American efficiency to be largely a myth.

DS: Have you seen many great changes in feature production over here since when you first started in England? Can you see any sort of trends?

JS: I wish there was a strong trend. I do feel a little depressed at the moment. When I started making films the British film industry was having a renaissance and people were making films about people in England. With the exception of films like *If. . . .*, *Charlie Bubbles* and *Kes*, they don't seem to be making them right now. I think that movement has switched to the States, and what's happened in the States is very interesting. There has been an enormous movement away from the traditional: people are saying: 'Enough bullshit.' This has been largely produced both by domestic conditions and by the Vietnam War, which has affected the whole country one way or another. A great number of people are now saying: 'Look, we will no longer tolerate these values.' And I think what has happened is the people, almost willy-nilly, have grasped on to films that have been, in any way, anti-establishment. Suddenly a lot of very direct and honest films about conditions in America are being made, and that, tied with the demise of Hollywood as we used to know it, and the rise of the independents, is making a climate that is very healthy. I think we're going to be looking to America, and to what's going on in America. We've had our revolution: what's going on here now is, in a sense, a backwash of what's been going on in America, and though we have identified with the Vietnam War it doesn't affect us as directly as it does America. I don't feel comfortable in America, but I feel stimulated by it. I feel safe here, but I think we've got to be very careful not to become too complacent about it.

DS: Could you say something about the demise of the studio system?

JS: Well, I think films were being financed in the most ridiculous way. I believe if you're going to see something on the screen, and it's worth x number of dollars or pounds, fair enough, but if costs are increasing merely to keep open an enormous empire which is not even functioning then it's totally uneconomic.

DS: How do you see the future for ABPC? Are you optimistic?

JS: I don't know. Here am I making another film for UA because my relation with UA is very good, and it was already set up before the new ABPC came into being. I think we have got to emerge with a strongly independent group of films. There's got to be a balance in the diet, of course. You can't have just highly personal films being made. You must have a few that are still being meted out by various distributors who say we must have more family films. I don't know what they mean by that. I no longer know what the family film is. I'm convinced they don't.

DS: Any long-term ambitions?

JS: To continue to have the independence that I have now. I just hope I have the energy to continue for a number of years to fight for what I have to do. I haven't got a lot of things on the shelf that I want to do, because everyone changes. I think one of the reasons that film-makers perhaps get old, as they say, is once you become successful you perhaps don't keep in touch as much as you should – one ceases to fight quite as hard for what one believes in, for every detail being right. I can't understand how famous film-makers, whom I won't mention, don't turn up to their music recording sessions or their dubbing sessions and get bored with their films. I can see the temptation to delegate more and more. I'm committed still to every detail of my films.

I've gained a lot of confidence, I've found my feet, rather late in life. I didn't start directing until I was well over thirty. I'm glad I didn't have a quick success in my life. It's taught me an awful lot. I think for a long time I felt a failure, but I don't know that I really was. I've always been interested in people – I've always been good with other people and concerned about them. I don't think I've become ruthless, though I'm absolutely ruthless in fighting for what I believe is right within my own work. I'll fight to the teeth for that. I just hope I continue to have that energy for some years to come, that's all.

David Spiers is an Assistant Editor at Millbank Films.

FILM CENSORSHIP in GREAT BRITAIN

JOHN TREVELYAN

I : HISTORY

The first public film show in England was given in London in 1896. In the early years of the present century this new form of public entertainment spread rapidly. Local authorities soon became concerned about the risk of fire in halls showing cinema films, which was a serious risk since the film stock then in use was highly inflammable. Some authorities took individual action in regard to the use of premises licensed by them. The London County Council, believing that wider powers were required by Local Authorities, asked Parliament for appropriate legislation, and was supported by some other authorities. This pressure led to the passing of The Cinematograph Act of 1909.

The drafting of the Act makes it clear that it was intended to enable adequate fire precautions to be enforced, and this was confirmed by the Regulations under Section I of the Act which contained no provisions relating to other than structural and safety matters. Some Local Authorities however interpreted their new powers more widely. The London County Council imposed a condition in licences that film shows would not be permitted on Sundays. Other authorities followed this example, and within a few months this rule was fairly widespread throughout the country. The validity of such a condition in the licences was tested in the courts by one London Company; after a verdict by a Magistrate in favour of the Company there was an appeal to the Divisional Court which reversed the judgement in favour of the Council, the Court holding that this section of the Act was 'intended to confer on the County Councils a discretion as to the conditions which they will impose, so long as those conditions are not unreasonable'.

This judgement did not have any immediate effect, but some individual authorities began to include in their licences conditions relating to the subject matter of films shown. The film industry naturally became concerned about this, and in February 1912 sent a joint deputation to the Home Secretary to propose that a censorship of films should be established on the lines of an organization which

was operating successfully in New York, and suggesting that the Home Secretary should appoint an official from his Department as final arbiter. The Home Secretary generally welcomed the main proposal, but was unwilling to appoint a final arbiter. The film industry therefore proceeded to set up a censorship board, the British Board of Film Censors, and appointed as its President Mr. G. A. Redford, who had been an Examiner of Plays for the Lord Chamberlain. In a statement from the film industry it was made clear that the British Board of Film Censors 'will be a purely independent and impartial body, whose duty it will be to induce confidence in the minds of the licensing authorities, and of those who have in their charge the moral welfare of the community generally'. The Board started its work on January 1st, 1913, and soon announced that all films released in Britain after March 1st, 1913, would bear a censors' certificate. Although submission of films to the Board was at first voluntary, most of the distributors agreed to submit their films, and it quickly became the accepted practice to do this.

This action in fact seemed to encourage Local Authorities to take individual action to control the content of films. The film industry, faced with local difficulties, appealed to the Courts, but without success. It then took steps to try to secure the recognition of the British Board of Film Censors by the larger and more important authorities. When this was not wholly effective the industry felt that the only hope was 'to obtain Government approval and recognition of an Official Censor Board'.

In 1915 Sir John Simon, who was then Home Secretary, sent proposals on these lines to the Local Authorities. The censorship, as proposed, would be administered by a new board under a President appointed by the Home Secretary, who would be assisted by an advisory committee consisting of representatives of authors, dramatists, educationalists, local authorities, the film industry and the general public. The film industry at once protested, mainly on the grounds that the new proposals did not get rid of local autonomy. The Home Secretary pointed out that to achieve this would involve new legislation, which would arouse opposition, and admitted that the new proposals were nothing more than the reconstitution of the existing Board under Home Office control, leaving the existing legal powers to the Local Authorities. It was on the point of local autonomy that the whole scheme foundered, since neither the film industry nor the Local Authorities would give way.

At this point the President of the British Board of Film Censors died, and was replaced by Mr. T. P. O'Connor, M.P.; and Mr. Samuel, who had succeeded Sir John Simon, was replaced as Home Secretary by Sir George Cave. The new Home Secretary abandoned

the proposal for an official censorship board and sent to licensing authorities model licensing conditions, ignoring the British Board of Film Censors. Mr. T. P. O'Connor took matters in hand, and, supported by favourable comments on the Board in a Report of a Cinema Commission set up by the National Council of Public Morals, was gradually able to restore the position of the Board and obtain the confidence of the authorities. Some authorities continued to take individual action, but in 1920 the Board received official recognition by the Middlesex County Council, which adopted the Board's certificate as a requirement in its cinema licences, and this was subsequently followed by similar recognition by the London County Council and other authorities. From this emerged the present pattern in which all films are submitted for censorship to the British Board of Film Censors, which issues appropriate certificates, while maintaining the legal right of any licensing authority to reverse or vary any decision made by the Board. In practice local authority action affects only a very small number of films each year, the decisions of the Board being normally accepted. The local authorities are virtually used by some film companies as 'courts of appeal' against what are regarded as unduly harsh decisions of the Board, and it should be noted that their decisions in such cases show considerable inconsistency.

11 : THE FINANCES AND COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD

(a) Finances

When steps were taken in 1912 to set up the British Board of Film Censors there were consultations between the film trade associations, and it was decided that 'censorship was purely a matter which interested the manufacturers', and that the financial side of the organization should be controlled by the association of manufacturers – The Incorporated Association of Kinematograph Manufacturers – with equal representation of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association. In fact, although no reliable information is now available, it appears that from its inception financial responsibility was undertaken solely by the manufacturers' association, possibly because the Board's first Secretary, Brooke Wilkinson, had been, and continued to be, Company Secretary to that Association. This decision, which seems somewhat strange today, has proved to be a fortunate one, since the manufacturers' association, which continues to exist, is the one trade association that has no direct interest in the Board's work, enabling the Board to be financed from trade sources without any dependence on any part of the film trade with a commercial interest in its work. It was made clear from the beginning that this association should be concerned solely with the Board's finances, and should

not in any way be responsible for its policies; and this position has been maintained throughout the Board's history. The Incorporated Association of Kinematograph Manufacturers now exists primarily for this purpose. The Secretary of the Board is 'ex-officio' its Company Secretary, and it has a Council duly elected at its Annual General Meetings.

The method of financing the operation of the Board is also a safeguard to its independence. No grant is made by any of the film trade associations, thus avoiding the possibility of pressure through finance. The necessary income is obtained by charging a fee for every film viewed; the Board is therefore obtaining its income in relatively small payments made by a considerable number of companies. The fees charged are calculated on an estimate of income required and of probable input of films for censorship. The Board operates as a non-profit-making organization, but nevertheless needs to cover its operating costs, and to maintain a reasonable reserve for capital expenditure when necessary.

(b) Composition

The title 'British Board of Film Censors' is liable to be misleading, since it suggests that the organization is controlled by a committee. It is, in fact, no more than a convenient and conventional title, c.f. The Board of Education, The Board of Trade. It is, at the present time, an organization that is under the joint control of two people, the President and the Secretary, who is chief executive officer.

This was not always the position. When the Board was first set up the operation of film censorship was put 'entirely under the direct control of the President, Mr. G. A. Redford, whose decision in all cases will be final'. This continued until recent years, the various Presidents taking full and complete personal responsibility. When Brooke Wilkinson retired in 1948 his successor, Arthur Watkins, was the personal appointee of the President at the time, Sir Sidney Harris. In 1957 Watkins resigned, and Sir Sidney Harris appointed a successor who eventually proved to be unsuitable for the job. In these circumstances he felt reluctant to take full personal responsibility for a new appointment, and asked that the appointment should be made by a selection committee that was representative of the principal film trade associations. I was the first Secretary to be appointed in this way.

The President of the Board has always been appointed by the film industry. Doubtless there have been variations in the appointment procedure, but the present procedure is that a nomination is made by the Council of the Incorporated Association of Kinematograph Manufacturers to a joint committee of the principal trade associa-

tions, after private informal consultations with the Home Secretary and the principal associations of local authorities. If this nomination is approved, the appointment is made by the Association.

In 1960, on the resignation of Sir Sidney Harris, the Council of The Incorporated Association of Kinematograph Manufacturers decided that in future, responsibility for film censorship should be shared by the President and the Secretary – the President to be responsible for broad general policy, and the Secretary to be responsible for executive decision. This organizational pattern has worked effectively.

The Board has at present five Examiners of Films, three men and two women. Of these two men and one woman are full-time Examiners, and one man and one woman are part-time Examiners. The full-time Examiners normally view films on not more than three days each week, but are required to be available for work on other days if necessary. The part-time Examiners view films on one day each week. The Examiners are paid appropriate salaries.

The Board does not seek to employ as Examiners people with specialist qualifications, or people who represent organizations or professions. They look for people who have a good educational background – normally a University degree – common sense, a sense of humour, an ability to work well with other people, and a love of films. It is an advantage if an Examiner has had experience of working with children and young people, or a knowledge of one or more European languages and has travelled extensively. The only disqualification is previous employment in the film industry.

In addition the Board has a small administrative staff, and a small technical staff required to operate projectors for the viewing of films in its private theatre.

III : METHODS OF OPERATION

The Board's Examiners view every film that is to be shown at commercial cinemas, except newsreels, which have always been excluded from censorship because of the need to put them into cinemas with the least possible delay. Everything else is censored, including film trailers and advertisements for national distribution. The Examiners work on a 'rota' basis, and each day the two Examiners on duty see the day's programme of films in the Board's private viewing theatre. If any film is likely to produce problems the Secretary, who obtains advance information from various sources, will see it with the Examiners. If a film involves a policy decision, or is exceptionally controversial, it will also be seen by the President.

The Board has no rules, but, of course, it has a general working

policy at any one time. Its general aim is to reflect in its work what it believes to be contemporary public attitudes. Public and personal attitudes of mind change, and the Board's policy changes too. One important influence is television; it would be difficult for the Board to continue to refuse in films material of the kind that is frequently shown on television, although there are fundamental differences between the two media.

When a film is seen, assuming that it is not considered to be wholly unsuitable for public exhibition, it is allocated to one of three categories – 'U', 'A' or 'X'. The purpose of the category system is the protection of children. The present category system is as follows:

'U' – A film in this category can bee seen by anyone above the minimum age of 5 (7 in the Greater London Area). Unaccompanied children may be admitted.

'A' – A film in this category can be seen by anyone of 16 and upwards, and by children under 16 if they are accompanied by, and in the charge of, someone of not less than 16. In effect the 'A' classification puts the responsibility on to the parent to decide whether the child can, or cannot, see the film. The classification indicates that in the opinion of the Board the film is suitable for most normal children to see, but contains material that some parents might prefer their children not to see.

'X' – A film in this category can be seen only by adults and by young people of not less than 16.

Category decisions are made in the light of experience. If considered necessary, cuts are required before a film is finally passed. Cuts are specified on paper, and are made by the film companies. If a company complains about cuts asked for, the Secretary will discuss them with the Company's representatives, or with the producer and director of the film.

In their decisions the Examiners take into account their impressions of the film's artistic quality, and of its integrity. The Board is normally more generous to a film of quality and integrity than to a film that appears to have been made for commercial exploitation.

It is difficult to put into words how the Board's Examiners reach decisions. Necessarily there are differences of opinion – indeed it is important that there should be since a unanimity of opinion would suggest that the Board did not fairly represent a cross-section of intelligent reaction – but experience of working together leads to a reconciliation of divergent views. When there is a basic disagreement the Secretary will take a decision; when there is a matter of policy, or a problem of special importance, the views of the President are

always obtained, and he may be required to take a final decision. The Board works in an informal way, and finds no great difficulty in resolving its differences. It would, however, never claim to be infallible, and is always prepared, on request, to reconsider its decisions.

There is a certain 'expertise' in its work. Not only is there an accumulated knowledge of the films censored over the years; there is also a knowledge of what is, and what is not, technically possible. This requires some knowledge of how films are made and put together. The Secretary particularly needs to have considerable technical knowledge of this kind; if he is to have the confidence of film-makers he must be able to talk their own language and be familiar with their problems.

Inevitably, there is a degree of apparent inconsistency, and occasionally this is used as an argument against a decision, but the inconsistency is more apparent than real, and it is the price to be paid for having no rules. If there were rules they would have to be applied equally to films of quality and to films for commercial exploitation, and both the film-maker and the public would suffer. Most film-makers and distributors believe that the present system is a good one; the French director, Max Ophuls, once said that it was the most intelligent system of censorship in the world.

In addition to censoring completed films the Board offers pre-production advice. Although this is entirely voluntary, scripts are sent to the Board for most productions in Britain. These are read, and appropriate advice is given, first by letter, and then, quite often, verbally in a discussion between the Secretary and the producer and director of the film. Further advice is sometimes given by the Secretary during the production and editing of the film.

The Secretary also maintains personal contacts with representatives of the local authorities, the churches, educational and welfare organizations, and the Press.

IV : POLICIES AND PROBLEMS

Judging by reports published by the Board in the period 1912 to 1935, their policies and problems were very different from those of today. It is clear that in its early period the Board regarded itself as guardian of public morality and protector of the Establishment; it also made it clear that there was no place on cinema screens for films concerned with controversial politics. Sex had to be most discreet; all nudity or 'provocative display of feminine under-clothing' was prohibited, and so also was any scene showing 'men and women in

bed together'. Excessive violence was not approved; nor were gruesome murders, execution scenes and so forth. Anything that might give religious offence was out of the question.

After the Second World War, the time of peak attendance in British cinemas, restrictions lessened to some degree, but it was not until Arthur Watkins became Secretary of the Board in 1947 – succeeding Brooke Wilkinson who had been Secretary since 1912 – that marked changes of policy became apparent. Watkins began a policy of liberalization that has continued ever since, and in doing this he had the support of his President, Sir Sidney Harris, who was the first President to take a really active part in the Board's work.

In his later years, at least, Brooke Wilkinson was something of an office recluse. Watkins was different, and moved about in the film world, getting to know producers, directors and actors, as well as the executives of Wardour Street. He encouraged film-makers to send their scripts for pre-production advice. His influence on the Board's work in his nine years of office was considerable, and he changed the whole concept of the Board's functions and also its methods of operation.

When Watkins left to become first Deputy President and, soon after, President of the British Film Producers Association, he was succeeded by John Nichols, and not long afterwards, in 1958, Nichols resigned and I was appointed to succeed him. I had first joined the Board in 1951 as a part-time Examiner, and had therefore had some experience of its work.

Being essentially a libertarian of the John Stuart Mill school I tried to continue the policies initiated by Watkins, and in this I was supported by Sir Sidney Harris and his successor as President, Lord Morrison of Lambeth, and even more by our present President, Lord Harlech. Our aims have been first to protect children to a reasonable degree, operating in a graduated way through the 'U' and 'A' categories, and secondly to liberate the film for adult audiences as far as seemed reasonable at any particular time. While in the last ten years we have greatly liberalized in the field of sex, we have not adopted a similar policy when dealing with scenes of violence, which we believe to be more harmful, both personally and socially, and we have been restrictive when dealing with films which might encourage drug-taking.

As far as our 'X' category is concerned we do not regard ourselves as guardians of public morality, and we base our decisions on an assessment of public acceptability at the time; in this way we act as a kind of barometer of public taste for the industry. We are opposed in principle to political censorship, and we do not set out to protect

the Establishment. We do our best to protect the film industry from public criticism – indeed the Board is the target of criticism if there is any – and we seek to protect the industry from court actions. The Board is also the link between the industry and the local authorities, and seeks to maintain their confidence as representatives of the public, while always recognizing the legal right of any local authority to vary or reverse the Board's decisions.

The work is full of problems, and there are new ones every week. Decisions have to be made quickly, often without any reliable assessment of public reaction. Policies are continuously changing, since public attitudes are continuously changing, and there is no certainty that assessments of public attitudes are accurate. Assessments are at least partly instinctive, and partly based on my meeting groups – film societies, university groups and others – in different parts of the country, on a study of press cuttings from national and provincial papers, and watching selected television programmes.

The Board is increasingly influenced by its assessment of the quality and integrity of a film. To make valid artistic judgements is not easy, and we would not claim to be experts, but this seems to be a sounder method of censorship than the strict application of rules to films of all types. In order to help to assess integrity I have got to know personally most of the leading film-makers in the world, and almost all film-makers working in Britain. Even so one cannot ignore the fact that the film industry is just as much an industry as any other, and that all film companies and film-makers hope that their films will be commercially successful.

IV : IMMEDIATE CHANGES

In the last two years, 1968 and 1969, there have been developments in various countries which have affected the work of the Board more and more. Violence has continued to be a major problem, but now there are problems of sex that the Board has never had before. Sweden and Denmark have for some years been more explicit in sex scenes than any other countries; now there appears to be a tidal wave of sex obsession spreading through Europe – Germany and Italy being particularly affected, each in its own individual way – and an even stronger wave flowing in the United States where, largely owing to pressures from the Catholic Church, sex in the cinema has never presented any serious censorship problems for the more liberal censorship in Britain. Pornography is widely on show in public cinemas, and is popular and profitable, so it would hardly be surprising if some of the major film companies which have financial

difficulties should decide that if this is what the public wants they must reflect this in their production policies.

So far the worst pornography on film has not come to Britain, but even so the Board now has problems with scenes of sex and sexual perversions, even in routine films, that would never have been contemplated even two years ago. The result is shown in the great increase in the number of films in the 'X' category. This category was introduced in 1951, and 1968 was the first year in which the number of 'X' feature films was larger than the number of feature films in either the 'U' or the 'A' category; the figures were 99 'U' films; 124 'A' films; and 169 'X' films. In 1969 the number of 'X' feature films was larger than the films in the 'U' and 'A' categories combined, the figures being 91 'U' films; 114 'A' films; and 219 'X' films.

A situation such as this is obviously to the disadvantage of the film industry and the public, and, since there appeared to be no likelihood of improvement, in the early summer of 1969 the Board decided to put forward proposals for revision of the present category system which was obviously under strain and not wholly realistic in the world of today.

The Board first consulted the film industry, since it would obviously not be sensible to bring in changes which would be unacceptable or unworkable. It then consulted the associations of local authorities, since without their acceptance any changes to the category system which is operated through conditions in cinema licences, could not be made. Consultations of this kind take time, but by January 1970 a new and revised category system was approved by all sections of the film industry, and by the associations of local authorities; only the Greater London Council postponed its decision.

The new Category System is to be as follows:

'U' – Permitting the admission of any child of not less than five years of age whether accompanied or not.

'A' – Permitting the admission of children, of not less than five years of age, whether accompanied or not. The letter 'A' will convey a warning to parents that a film in this category will contain some material that some parents might prefer their children not to see.

'AA' – Permitting the admission of children of not less than fourteen years of age, whether accompanied or not, but not the admission of any child under fourteen years of age.

'X' – Permitting the admission of persons of not less than eighteen years of age.

The Greater London Council may possibly permit the admission to 'X' films in cinemas licensed by them of persons of not less than sixteen years, but this is not yet finally decided.

This new system will have four considerable advantages. It will get rid of any regulation requiring a child under a particular age to be accompanied to a cinema by an adult – a regulation which can now give cinema staff a difficult and sometimes embarrassing responsibility; it will reflect the fact that the present age-range for the 'A' category of 5 to 16 is too wide, and will take into account the more rapid maturing of children today; it will give the Board increasing flexibility in dealing with films confined to adult audiences (adult status now being attained at the age of 18); and it will provide a waiting period during which a reasonable measure of control can be maintained while we can assess the social and individual effects in the countries which have chosen to have complete, or almost complete, freedom for adult audiences. This new Category System will come into operation on July 1st, 1970.

VI : THE FUTURE

The future is, of course, unpredictable. There are pressures in this country, as in some other countries, to remove censorship for adult audiences. There are also critics of increasing permissiveness. As already shown, there is a considerable spread of pornography, which is commercially successful, and if this increases and moves to other countries not so far affected, including Britain, it could lead to the virtual demise of the film as we have known it for many years, since good films will not be made if there is no likelihood of their being profitable. Hollywood production, on which most cinemas in the world have depended for a substantial proportion of their programmes, is greatly reduced, and may be further reduced. We can only guess what will take its place.

The position may well be affected by new technological advances, in particular the showing of films in one's home on cassettes through the television set. If developed, and marketed at a price which is not exorbitant, this could stimulate film production and destroy distribution and exhibition. The cinema might even be limited to 70 mm theatres, with even more technical improvements, and to art-theatres which would show films for minority audiences.

The British Board of Film Censors has survived for nearly 60 years. It may well survive for much longer, even if only for the protection of children, or, with the new category system, it may prove to be needed still for adult audiences as well; or it may be swept away in a

new era of yet more liberalism. In this situation it seems wise to wait at least for a while before Parliament is asked to abolish this kind of control, since if it should be abolished by removing the powers of the licensing authorities by Act of Parliament it might be difficult to restore it if the results proved to be harmful rather than beneficial to the individual and to society.

John Trevelyan O.B.E. is Secretary of The British Board of Film Censors.

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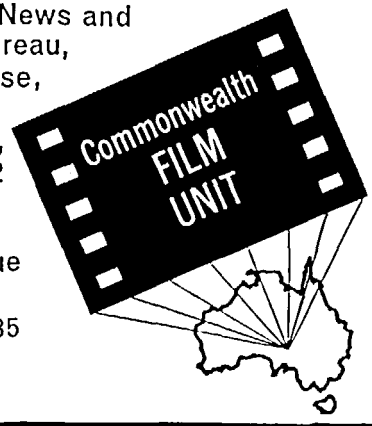

The Effects of Violence in the Mass Media

Vicki Eves

The Ex-Home Secretary, Mr. James Callaghan, recently sought the co-operation of the two British television authorities, in restricting the amount of fictional and documentary violence shown on television. He reminded them of the widespread belief that there is a link between television violence and crime, and pointed to American evidence that television violence has imitative effects. This action comes only a few months after the publication in the United States of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence Statement on violence in television. The Commission makes exactly the same kind of assertions as Mr. Callaghan and recommends that the American television networks should reduce the amount and type of violent television programmes being shown. A large number of people are unquestionably concerned about the amount of violence in the media – although how much this is a reaction to social expectations is not clear – for even the media authorities themselves, contend that there should be concern about the extent of television and film violence. More specifically, there have been, both in the United States and Britain, individuals who have launched particularly vociferous attacks on television violence. In the United States, Dr. Frederick Wertham, whose original observations had been against comic books as a 'new kind of harm, a new kind of bacillus that the present-day child is exposed to',[1] later turned his attention to television, which he considers has a cumulative effect on children, and functions as a mediator between the child and his environment. Arthur Schlesinger, the American historian, also believes that television teaches children 'the morality of violence' and gives us his impression of the 'children of the electronic age' who sit 'hypnotized by the parade of killings, beatings, gunfights, knifings, maimings, brawls which flash incessantly across the tiny screen'. (P. 54.)[2] In Britain, Mrs. Mary Whitehouse, one of the most constant critics of television violence, speaks of the 'sub-Christian concept of living' that television is propagating and points

to the widespread effects that television violence is having on crime. She supports her latter contention with evidence taken from Lincolnshire police reports of incidents involving young people and adults who have copied methods or 'copied the ideas' for criminal acts, from television programmes. She is convinced that these 'individual cases where crimes of violence were directly related to scenes on television programmes could be multiplied many times'.[3] Bryan Forbes feels that, in the area of the cinema, certain forms of violence are likely to be copied by people – particularly the form which he calls the 'pornography of violence' – a phrase originally used by Schlesinger to describe a kind of demoralizing television and film violence that 'implies a whole culture of human violation'. (P. 53.)[2]

Are these fears justified? And does the evidence provide enough foundation to result in Government intervention?

The kind of evidence that Mrs. Whitehouse presents is typical of the extremely crude analysis of the effects of media violence that can take place. Social scientists recognize that incidents of direct imitation of media violence occur, but such actions are normally considered symptomatic of already existing delinquent tendencies. A disturbed child or adult may borrow from any aspect of his environment when devising an anti-social act. To prove that media exposure leads to violent behaviour requires more than a documentation of case histories of violent acts that are thought to have resulted from straightforward imitation of filmed violence. There needs to be some way of differentiating between levels of effect on the viewer of observing media violence and a way of differentiating between the types of violence depicted. It is conceivable that verbal aggression could be more disturbing than certain kinds of physical violence, one piece of American research, for example, found that delinquent boys were more disturbed, and behaved more violently after seeing a film where parent–child relationships were central, than after seeing a film which portrayed physical violence.

The research on the effects of viewing media depicted violence is in many ways inconclusive, primarily because of the difficulty of implementing a research programme in so complex an area as that of attitudinal or behavioural change. This should be a major consideration for those who blame the mass media for much of the violence in society. Violence could have much more basic social roots than the mass media though. This article will in no way attempt to explore the alternative social bases of violence. Rather it will look at the available evidence on the effects of media-depicted violence, to see whether the attack on the mass media as a major cause of violence, is justified.

LABORATORY EXPERIMENTS

A large number of laboratory experiments have been carried out to test the reactions of children and young adults to violent film content. The majority of these studies do suggest that media-violence is likely to incite children to acts of overt aggression. These results, however, have serious limitations. In all but a very few cases, where effect over time has been tested, the studies only demonstrate short-range effects and in none of the experiments can it be shown that the media induce changes in persistent modes of conduct. No research design has yet been employed which can prove anything about accumulative effects or long-term effects on attitudes and values. There are two other characteristics of these laboratory experiments which make it difficult to generalize from the results. The first is that 'aggression', as it is defined experimentally, is very distant in nature from the sort of violent behaviour our society condemns. Dr. Joseph Klapper thinks that 'these experiments do not tell us anything at all about whether persons exposed to mass media depictions of violence therefore become more likely to commit acts of violence ... the experiments do not deal with violence in the sense in which we are all concerned about violence'.[4]

The second characteristic of the experiments, that puts them in something of a social vacuum, is that they do not deal with the effects of witnessing mass media as the media are witnessed in real life. In most of the experiments films are shown to the experimental subjects in situations much divorced from those in which the media would normally be viewed, and aggression in the post film situation is often directed towards dolls or other toys which are not relevant to a situation of interpersonal aggression. In addition the experimental films generally show behaviour divorced from any context – an important omission when one considers that attention and memory of media material, particularly in children, depends on identification with selected characters. Bearing in mind the dangers of extrapolation from the experimental to the real life situation, these laboratory experiments have still highlighted some interesting aspects of media effects.

IMITATION AND INCREASED AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

One line of approach taken, has been that of looking at whether or not direct imitative modelling responses occur when children are exposed to aggressive film material. Dr. Albert Bandura and his associates have done a series of experiments on this subject, which show that initially frustrated young children will imitate the behaviour of a filmed model. The experiments typically followed the procedure of allowing nursery school children to watch various

film models play with a selection of toys. The experimental groups (i.e. those exposed to 'aggressive' conditions, as opposed to the control groups, who did not witness any film) were then mildly frustrated, before being allowed to play with toys which included some similar to those seen in the film. Bandura's findings show that observing a model portraying aggression in film, substantially increases the probability of aggressive reactions to subsequent frustrations. He also showed that there appeared to be no significant difference between the levels of aggression after seeing a cartoon film model and a human film model behaving aggressively. Exposure of children to aggressive models not only had the effect of increasing aggression, it also shaped the children's behaviour. The models were transmitting new patterns of behaviour to the children as well as eliciting a general aggressive response. Bandura suggested that a model's uninhibited expression of behaviour could act as a disinhibiting influence on children, by extinguishing or counter-conditioning anxiety responses in the observer.

Response consequences to the film model may also be important. One experiment demonstrated that if the aggressive model was rewarded, children showed much more imitative aggression than if the model was punished. The children copied the model even though they expressed moral disapproval of his actions. It was not the intrinsic desirability of the model's aggression that led to imitation, but his success in gaining and controlling rewarding resources.

> 'The finding that successful villainy may outweigh the viewer's value systems has important implications for the possible impact of televised stimulation on children's attitudes and social behaviour.'[5]

These experiments throw an interesting light on the allegations by Wertham, Mrs. Whitehouse, and others that the mass media stimulate violence. The implication of their argument is that media violence alters the level of instigation to violence in the viewer – that people have become increasingly predisposed to act violently. Bandura's experiments suggest that people are not *more likely to instigate* aggressive acts as a result of watching film violence, but that they are more likely to behave aggressively and imitate the kind of violence seen on film *if* they are provoked or frustrated at a later date. Thus the anecdotal data, used by Wertham and Mrs. Whitehouse, as proof for the very broadly defined proposition that television violence is the cause of increased violence in society, in one respect supports Bandura's much more precise hypothesis that the film portrayal of aggression may shape the form aggression takes when a person is actually instigated to act aggressively.

The cases which Mrs. Whitehouse quotes, primarily concern young

people who, in a violent or criminal situation, have copied methods from television. Her examples are certainly not sufficient evidence that television is a prime cause of social violence. They do illustrate, however, the kind of real life situations to which Bandura's laboratory findings could be related – situations in which the individual cannot differentiate sharply between fantasy and reality (Bandura's experiments involved children – who find it particularly difficult to discount fantasy situations), where there are no strong inhibitory tendencies, as in hostile adolescents (Bandura was using pre-school children who are typically deficient in behaviour controls) and where there are cues in the real life situation that were also present in the make-believe setting (the children in Bandura's experimental play settings had as one of their toys a 'Bobo' doll, a replica of the doll subjected to attack by the film model).

In one of his articles Bandura quotes an incident that occurred in San Francisco, between two boys who re-enacted a knife fight that they had seen the previous evening on television: the fight resulted in one of the boys being seriously injured. This is exactly the kind of occurrence to which Mrs. Whitehouse and others refer. It is therefore interesting to look at an analysis of the San Francisco incident made by Dr. Leonard Berkowitz in a discussion of Bandura's work.

> 'If a little speculation is permitted, we can see some of the hostility-inciting factors at work in this case. The weapon is a good starting point. Since one of the teenagers had gone out of his way to acquire an illegal knife (and later was arrested for possessing it), it is at least conceivable that he had relatively strong aggressiveness habits. He certainly did not have strong aggression anxiety. When this boy exhibited the knife in school the day after the movie, the other adolescent evidently was instantly reminded of the fight scene (the knife cue present in the movie also was present in this later situation, producing an association between the two settings) and at once began to imitate the violent actions he had witnessed in the film. The two youngsters were quickly swept up into the make-believe fight. But they did not stop at fantasy. Relatively uncontrolled hostility rapidly emerged, and the knife was thrust into the other boy's body.' (239)[6]

One should note here the reference to one of the boys already aggressive character, i.e. 'he had relatively strong aggressiveness habits'.

Some recent work in Britain by Bromely Kniveton and Dr. Geoffrey Stephenson, along the lines of Bandura's work, suggests that the imitation of film aggression in the experimental situation is largely dependent on the novelty of the situation. They conducted an experiment, following the pattern set by Bandura, with the difference

that one group of children were allowed to play in the experimental room before, as well as after, seeing the aggressive film model. This prior experience with the toys in the experimental situation, established a set of interests in the children that 'inoculated them' against the model's aggressive example. A familiar environment was shown to dramatically reduce the amount of imitation by children. This finding sets severe limits on the extent to which one can generalize from Bandura's results, since children, after watching television in a real life setting, return to a familiar world of established relationships. This was not an aspect allowed for in Bandura's experimental paradigm; his children went into a novel situation after watching the film model – so although he showed that normal children react aggressively to violence on films, they were normal children in an abnormal setting and therefore his results may only be relevant to an atypical situation. Such a situation could be one where the child has few interests of his own and 'for whatever reason will be more likely to imitate the behaviour of film and television characters'.[7]

JUSTIFIED FILM AGGRESSION

Most experimental work on the effects of media-violence has ignored the context of the film violence, except in so far as it relates to the attributes of the aggressive model. Dr. Leonard Berkowitz conducted a number of experiments (using adult subjects) to test the possible effects on an audience of watching justified aggression. He came up with the finding that if the hero used justifiable aggression against the villain in a film extract, then the observers were more inclined to behave violently towards the 'villain in their own lives'. He sees a danger in films that show the criminal or 'bad guy' being punished aggressively, because there is inherent in a situation of such justified violence, the likelihood that an angered person in the audience will attack someone who has frustrated him. Berkowitz does recognize, however, that other factors come into play in the viewing situation: the readiness of the viewer to act aggressively, his attitudes towards the observed violence and the relationship of the 'aggressor' in the viewer's real life situation to the aggressor in the portrayed incident. The implications of Berkowitz's research for film and television programme policy is interesting. The American Television Code, for example, states that 'the inevitable retribution' for a criminal act should be made clear: and the British ITV code considers that the 'good' character may use violence as long as it is 'socially defensible'. Yet if we accept Berkowitz's findings, these justifiable acts of aggression could lead to violence in a member of the audience.

CARTHARSIS

Very little of the experimental research on media-violence suggests that it has a purging or 'cathartic' effect on aggressive drive. Berko-

witz's explanation of this is that effective catharsis only occurs when an angered person perceives that his frustrator has been aggressively injured. It is possible though that a 'more subtle form of catharsis' occurs when someone with an aggressive drive watches violent material. David Martin and F. E. Emery of Melbourne University found that adolescents tended to identify with television characters most like their own ego-ideal. By watching the film material they were able to translate and express their own unresolved problems. Any change that might be brought about in the way in which the individual saw himself in relation to his social environment was, however, temporary and did not appear to involve any systematic change in aggressive drive. Emery and Martin also point out that wide generalizations about the effects of media-violence on children's aggressive habits are unlikely to be valid.

> 'Theoretically it is difficult to see how one could predict any such consistent relationship without specifying those personality factors of the viewer which mediate between viewing and subsequent psychological changes.'[8]

Indeed there are so many elements to be considered in the social and psychological make-up of the individual that experiments on imitation and increased drive can only point to factors that *might* contribute towards children's and adults' behaviour.

GENERALIZATIONS FROM EXPERIMENTAL DATA

Such experiments also ignore the numerous other aspects of the media-viewer relationship. Do news reports of, for example, race riots have any stimulating effect on collective violence (the Kerner Report on the Newark and Detroit riots raises this question, without coming to any conclusive answer)? Is there an effect over time, on the attitudes and values of the viewer? Does the context and plot of fictional material lead to differential effects? Does media-violence have effects *other* than those of overt violence, that are equally (or more) important? A few experiments have attempted to answer these questions, but, as has been pointed out above, research designs in this complex area are difficult to implement.

As far as long-term effects are concerned, very little is known. Kniveton and Stephenson found the effects on children of watching aggressive film material very short lived, but this is not really relevant to the problem of accumulative effects. Emery and Martin speculate that the problem of 'cumulative effects' is probably a question of stereotypes – the establishment of unconscious assumptions about one's relation to the world. One study by Alberta Siegal found that the media were a source of incidental role learning for children – although she considers that there must be much more

elaborate experimentation before it can be definitely concluded that reality expectations of children about violence are seriously affected by the media. On the question of effects elicited by media-violence, other than overt aggression, David Martin states that 'the central problem is that of arousing anxiety, rather than . . . violence'. One recent piece of research that deals with this problem, comes to the conclusion that different forms of filmed aggression lead to varying degrees of aggression anxiety. It is possible that personal violence between people at close range causes greater anxiety than violence at a distance and that realistic aggression causes greater anxiety than fantasy aggression. In fact, fantasy aggression seems to cause hardly any psychological disturbance. In addition, middle-class children show a greater anxiety reaction to aggressive film content than working-class children, presumably because of different social norms in the two classes, concerning physical violence.[9] Clearly the problem is a many-faceted one. It is unlikely to be solved if the only concern is to test the more obvious aspects of the violent media/violent behaviour relationship. Added to this are the dangers of translating laboratory results into statements about the effects of media in real life situations. Whether an action which is said to occur in the experimental set-up will occur outside the laboratory setting will very much depend on the strength of competing responses and social restraints.

FUNCTIONS OF VIOLENCE

One way of looking at the relationship between the media and their audience is to ask what function the media serve for those to whom they communicate. The violence content of television programmes and of films is extremely high in comparison with the incidence of violence in real life. The precise proportion of violent acts is difficult to estimate as accounts from different sources differ, the variation in estimates being primarily due to varying definitions of the word 'violence'. Some studies discount, for example, humorous violence and verbal violence; others include it. Also few studies have included news and documentary violence in their tally, presumably because popular fears about the effects of media violence are almost totally confined to the area of fantasy violence. Whatever the exact number of violent acts, the fact remains that violence is abundantly depicted in the mass media. It is, in addition, violence of a particular kind. Robert Schlesinger quotes the results of an eight-hour monitoring of three United States television networks and half a dozen local outlets published by the *Saturday Review*:

> 'We marked down ninety-three specific incidents involving sadistic brutality, murder, cold-blooded killing, sexual cruelty and related sadism . . . We encountered seven different kinds of pistols

and revolvers, three varieties of rifle, three distinct brands of shotgun, half a dozen assorted daggers and stilettos, two types of machete, one butcher's cleaver, a broadaxe, rapiers galore, a posse of sabers, an electric prodder, and a guillotine. Men (and women and even children) were shot by gunpowder, burned at the stake, tortured over live coals, trussed and beaten in relays, dropped into molten sugar, cut to ribbons (in color), repeatedly kneed in the groin, beaten while being held defenseless by other hoodlums, forcibly drowned, whipped with a leather belt.' (P. 54.)[2]

It is clear from this description, that television is portraying a form of violence that is not typical of that which is experienced within the society. The reality of violence off the screen is that it occurs most frequently between intimates, inside the home or in some other familiar social setting. The question to be asked, therefore, is what gratification people get from watching screen violence which is atypical both in kind and quantity from that experienced in real life.

It is this aspect of media-depicted violence that future research at the Leicester Centre for Mass Communication Research will be concerned with. They will be asking why people are interested in the sort of violence on which the mass media concentrates; they will look more closely at the patterns of violence in the media; and they will place the question of what gratification the individual gets from media-violence within the wider context of the function that conflict has for society as a whole.

Various, rather disparate pieces of research, conducted up to the present time, have suggested some ways in which fictional media-violence contributes to the psychological and social needs of the individual.

FANTASY

Dr. Hilde Himmelweit, in her study in 1958 of the effects of television on children, found that the heavy viewer of both television and the cinema was typically a child who was insecure and found difficulty in making friends with other children and in their answers to personality inventories and questionnaires, showed anxiety about getting on with other children. Television and other forms of ready-made entertainment allowed such children to withdraw from real situations.

Eleanor Maccoby in a study in Boston discovered that the more children were frustrated in their home life (characterized by being subjected to many restrictions and not treated permissively or warmly) the greater was their television intake. Her results were subject to class differences, but this was explained by the different

viewing patterns in middle-class and lower-class homes. Upper-lower-class children showed no relationship between home frustrations and amount of television watching, because in this class the parents themselves spent a great deal of time watching television, so the child, whether frustrated or not, would be drawn to television as a dominant family activity. Upper-middle-class children, on the other hand, came from a home where television was watched relatively little by the parents and therefore the frustrated upper-middle-class child's withdrawal into the world of television fantasy, was more apparent. Wilbur Schramm, in a survey of adolescents, obtained similar results to those of Maccoby. Middle-class teenagers made greater use of television if they suffered from conflict with their parents over educational and occupational aspirations or if they were in conflict with their peer group over aspirations.

In all these surveys it appears that the socially frustrated child attempts to escape from the agents of its frustration into a world of television fantasy. There may, though, be a further attribute of a frustrated child. Berkowitz and others have pointed out that one of the causes of human aggression is a history of persistent frustrations. The child who is a heavy television viewer is therefore also likely to have strong aggressive inclinations. This is supported by Schramm, who found that the children in his sample who were 'fantasy orientated' (that is who spent a great deal of time watching television) were significantly higher than other children on a measure of anti-social aggression. Similarly, Lotte Bailyn found in a survey of children's media habits that the boys who exposed themselves most to television had many problems about themselves, their friends and their families and had 'rebelliously independent' and relatively aggressive tendencies.

Such children have been shown, in many surveys, to like particular kinds of aggressive programmes. The 'rebelliously independent' boys of Bailyn's survey had a marked preference for the 'aggressive hero' type of story, in which the protagonist aggressively defends himself and others from hostile action, as for instance in Superman and western programmes. Matilda and John Riley found that radio and television programmes characterized by violence, action and aggression were more popular with non-members of peer groups – who were presumably the kind of children who would be most likely to provoke feelings of hostility and aggression in a social situation – than among socially well integrated children. Among older children, who would normally have lost much of their interest in programmes of action and violence, this liking remained strongest amongst the socially frustrated children.

Violence in the mass media does seem, therefore, to serve a function

for certain types of children. It appears to provide a substitute world into which they can escape from the problems and tensions of life. Experiments have shown that children are unlikely to release their aggression through the medium of fantasy – although it may be, as pointed out above, that mass media fantasy provides a vehicle for the temporary working out of emotional problems.

IDENTIFICATION

A delinquency project at the Leicester Centre suggests a further function of aggressive material. The results of this project did not show delinquents to be more frequent television viewers than non-delinquents, but they did show that delinquent boys had a significantly greater liking for aggressive programmes and for the kind of hero-figures depicted in this kind of programme. The attraction of these boys to such 'masculine' hero-figures may be a result of the inadequacy of their own fathers as models for identification, and they therefore sought more suitable replacement figures in the world of television. This is a form of identification somewhat dissimilar to that which is involved when a child works out his own problems through film fantasy (what Emery calls identification with an ego-ideal). It is rather an identification which allows for exploration and development of new role possibilities.

It seems from these results that the emotional needs of certain children produce particular kinds of media habits and that aggressively inclined children do not learn their aggression from the media, but rather go to the mass media for certain kinds of satisfaction. It is conceivable that a child predisposed to commit acts of violence will have those predispositions reinforced by mass media depictions of violence and will learn new techniques from the media. But the same effects could accrue from other sources, particularly if the child comes from a sub-culture in which violence is a norm.

CONCLUSION

On the whole there is no definitive case presented by research data to show that the media is an important reinforcing agent. Neither is there adequate evidence to prove that violence in the media renders people more likely to commit violent acts.

Experimental research only proves that a form of innocuous 'aggression' can be aroused by watching an 'aggressive film clip in a socially unrealistic setting'. Unless this is understood, statements such as the one made by the U.S. Senate Sub-committee to investigate Juvenile Delinquency that, 'Experiments have shown that normal persons who see a violent film subsequently exhibit nearly twice as much violence as persons who have not seen such a film' can be misleading. The definition of socially deviant violence is totally different from

the definition of violence that is used in the experimental situation. It therefore seems unreasonable to put pressure on media authorities to limit the amount of violence they show. The social sciences cannot provide definite evidence of a causal link between violent media and violent behaviour, and, until they can, there is little justification for censoring the media on the basis of such a social prejudice as that of 'the widespread belief that there is a link between television violence and crime'. It may well be that violence in the media does not lead to physically violent behaviour but that violence in the media is a symptom of more general social conflict.

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THE DAMNED:

Visconti, Wagner and the 'Reinvention of Reality'

MARGARET TARRATT

In his book on Visconti, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith commented on the director's waning popularity. To judge from reactions so far to his latest film *The Damned* (subtitled *Götterdämmerung*) which deals with the rise of Nazism, it seems unlikely that this will turn the tide in his favour. The film has received unprecedented publicity for a work by Visconti, based partly on its estimated appeal to fashion designers and partly on its purported violence and sensational sexual content. Newspapers and colour supplements were fed regularly with items such as the story of the elderly Jew who had a heart attack when driving down the swastika bedecked main street of the Austrian lakeside resort, Unterrach am Attersee, where the scenes of the SA on vacation were shot. Visconti's insistence on authenticity of décor and costume has given rise to anecdotes of how he sent for white German sausages from Munich to be hung in the butcher's window in place of the pink Austrian variety, or how he insisted on replacing the carpeted floor of the dining-room set with the more authentic oak blocks which took five days to lay. Some of the clothes in the film are said to be originals of the period, others are seam for seam reproductions.

The reports of those who had actually seen the film before it was shown in London, were little less than sensational themselves and acted as advance publicity. A *Daily Express* headline cited it as THE SHOCKER COMING YOUR WAY.[1] *Time* suggested that it: 'overwhelms with its own unabashed sensationalism' and outdoes Wagner's *Ring* in 'zestful vulgarity'.[2] William Hall of the *Evening News* dwelt on: 'one of the most blood-thirsty five minutes ever to be shown on film.'[3] Visconti,s reply when confronted with this outcry is reported to be: 'It is sometimes necessary to make people feel sick in their stomachs.'[4]

One of the most hysterical attacks has come from Richard Roud, writing in *The Guardian*, who appears to take his line from Pasolini on

Visconti's essential decadence.[5] Claiming that Visconti has 'pushed back the frontiers of "camp" as far as they will go. Too far, I think', Roud continues:

> 'Visconti however is still pretending to be a left wing film-maker so we get little sops of social commentary amidst the wish-fulfilment fantasy. He is obviously more than a little fascinated with the accoutrements of Nazi Germany and this complacency is rendered most unattractive by the hypocrisy of his treatment.'[6]

Clearly, Visconti will never be forgiven for being first, an aristocrat and secondly a director whose very style betrays the tenets of socialist realism to which the authentic left wing film-maker is generally expected to cling. Nevertheless, his notable achievements in previous films should at least guarantee him more serious consideration than the journalese of Richard Roud, or John Coleman's *New Statesman* review – 'A Load of Old Krupp'.

Visconti has always rejected the labels of 'mannerist' or 'stylist', and to support his argument, cites the change in critical opinion which developed over a period of time with regard to *La Terra Trema*. He insists:

> 'My most important preoccupation is the continuity of the theme. To make this continuity come out is my principal operation. I do not give more importance to the technique than to the sentiments. There are directors who are more preoccupied with the exterior aspects of a film but this is absolutely not my point of view.'[7]

His insistence that in *The Damned* he is trying to show to the young what Nazism was becomes more comprehensible when taken in conjunction with his views on the function of the artist:

> 'The reality must always be reinvented and if you have colour, then like a painter you can reinvent reality with your colour. I think that colour must be used like this in movies. Not like a *copy* of reality because a copy of reality is never art. *Art is reinvention of reality.*'[8]

It would be strange indeed, considering the subject matter of *The Damned*, were Visconti not fascinated by 'the accoutrements of Nazi Germany'. He himself has recognized this: 'I'm very German. I like the German *cultura*, German music, German *filosofia*, and also the origin of the Visconti family is in Germany so *a la lontano* I am a little German,'[9]

He has reiterated his purpose in making this film which is at odds with the sensationalist charges of his critics:

> 'I want to ask in this picture where lay the responsibility for the Nazis in Germany. The most grave responsibility was with the bourgeoisie and the industrialists because if Hitler had not had

'A *cellula* of humanity' – the von Essenbeck birthday dinner

> their help he would never have arrived to real power. Books say that the Krupps paid Hitler, so I don't invent. And I like in all my films to have a *cellula* of humanity, a family. I try to explain in the development of this family the parallel of what happens in Germany and later in the world. That is all I try to say.'[10]

Briefly, *The Damned* is concerned with the history of a family of wealthy German industrialists, the von Essenbecks, whose fortunes are bound up in their munitions firm. The film opens on the day of the burning of the Reichstag and follows the attempts of an outsider, Friederich Bruckmann (Dirk Bogarde) to take over the leadership of the business. Bruckmann is supported by Aschembach, a shadowy Essenbeck relative in the SS, and by his mistress, Sophie (Ingrid Thulin), the old Baron von Essenbeck's daughter. Victims of his rise to power are the Baron, Herbert Thallman, an anti-Nazi on whom blame for the murder is laid, and Konstantin, brother of the Baron and a member of the SA who is slaughtered by Friederich during the 'Night of the Long Knives'. Aschenbach, however, comes to believe that the Nazis have backed the wrong man and takes under his wing the pervert and weakling, Martin (Helmut Berger), grandson of the Baron, dominated and cowed by his mother Sophie, whose frustrated love for her has turned to loathing. After a public showdown with Bruckmann, in which Martin challenges his authority and reveals his knowledge of his murders, he turns on his mother and later rapes her. This is the one humiliation he can inflict which must break her iron spirit and drive a wedge between her and her lover. Martin stages the marriage of Friederich and the now zombie-like,

sedated Sophie and offers them his wedding gift – two cyanide capsules. The penultimate scene of the film shows Martin standing over their corpses, his arm raised in the Nazi salute.

Sources which inspired the film are *Macbeth, Buddenbrooks* and the history of the Krupps. Visconti had originally planned a straight film of *Macbeth* which came to nothing. Another idea had been to film *Buddenbrooks* but to update it to take place during the beginning of the Nazi movement. 'From this,' says Visconti, 'the script came. There are one or two similarities with *Macbeth* in the murders, but not more. The focus is put on other things.'[11]

The relationship to *Buddenbrooks* and Thomas Mann is more revealing.[12] Mann's purpose in this novel was to show the decline of the German business family, Buddenbrooks, through the increasing paralysis of will of its various members, amounting to a form of death wish. But its popular appeal seems to have stemmed from the analogy drawn by the public between the hidden decadence of the Imperial régime and the fall of the Buddenbrooks family. The kind of analogy which Visconti draws in his film between the history of the von Essenbecks and the rise of Nazism is by no means without precedent in literature. As artists, Visconti and Mann have more than a little in common. The symbolic structure of Mann's novels in which 'characters and situations take on a representative symbolic character' incorporating a 'general human predicament'[13] goes hand

Martin humiliates his Mother

in hand with a minute attention to naturalistic detail. Both Mann and Visconti are stylists without being mere aesthetes. Mann's 'static and reflective'[14] language and the distancing he achieves through his intrusion as a narrator might be said to be paralleled by Visconti's slow-moving camera which dwells on the remarkable textures and grouping he achieves in his work and which sometimes takes on an independent life of its own. In *The Damned,* for instance, during the scene of the birthday concert, the camera wanders amongst the spectators like an unseen guest lingering on individual faces in unhurried scrutiny. Its movement does not follow the most predictable action but ranges freely, at one moment swooping at a sharp angle to focus on an empty doorway, through which some floodlights for the stage are almost immediately wheeled. The attraction Mann felt towards the romantic philosophies of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Wagner, even while combating them in his work, is generally held to add a further dimension of complexity to his vision. Unlike Visconti, he is not castigated for this 'failing' any more than Milton has been for his subconscious identification with Satan in *Paradise Lost.* In literary criticism, it is rarely assumed that such conflict automatically undermines the overall moral fabric of a work. Visconti's feeling for a spacious quality of life and a sensuous pleasure in the aristocratic or grand style, which makes for much of the richness and tension of a film such as *The Leopard* is, on the other hand, often held to be suspect, at best, the offshoot of naïveté about his own subconscious, at worst, the 'hypocrisy' for which he is slated by Richard Roud.

More specific parallels between *Buddenbrooks* and *The Damned* are to be found between Mann's conscious use of the Wagnerian leitmotif which becomes part of the symbolic structure of his work and Visconti's use of the same technique in this film. The strongest recurrent image in *The Damned* is that of fire. The opening and closing shots of an ominous fiery furnace is an image to which we often return, either directly or through analogy, as in the book-burning scene. Faces are frequently shown lit in a red glow, as if reflecting flames. The long sequence of the SA orgy is lit with orange light. In the general colour scheme of blues, browns and golds, even the red carnation in a buttonhole seems to burn its way into the picture. A second major leitmotif is that of masks, costumes and acting. The film begins by showing us various members of the family dressing with studied care for Baron Joachim's birthday dinner. The atmosphere is one of expectancy as if before a performance. This is emphasized by the sound of Guenther practising for the birthday concert. Later, on a small stage, the children perform a well-drilled recitation, Guenther plays one of the Bach cello suites and finally, Martin appears in drag as Marlene Dietrich. His act is disrupted by an

The book burning

announcement of a more 'dramatic' outside event – the burning of the Reichstag. During the subsequent action, he retains his doll-like make-up with its finely plucked and pencilled eyebrows. His anger, when his turn is interrupted, bursts through the painted features of his cosmetic 'mask' in a bizarre snarl of fury. At the SA orgy sequence, remarkable for its theatrical grouping, there is again emphasis on the wearing of drag. When drunk, the men reveal their real desires and instincts, wearing a curious combination of male and female garments. The camera picks out Martin for us again, a disconsolate figure in black net stockings. In his melodramatic confrontation with his mother, he reproaches her for the way in which she has humiliated him through her encouragement to wear her blonde wigs and dresses. After her rape, on her wedding day, Sophie herself makes a dramatic entry to the ceremony like a hideous painted corpse, with chalk-white skin, red lips, revealing yellowed teeth, and a striking hat with a cluster of pointed feathers. The room is not furnished in traditional style any more, but festooned with swastika-decorated banners and pictures of Hitler, like a platform at a Nazi rally. The guests who have been dancing in a languid dissipated manner move aside as if to watch a cabaret. The close-ups of Sophie after the ceremony, accepting the feigned congratulations with a clockwork smile, give a fearful image of her enforced role of actor. In this context, most of the film can be seen in terms of putting up a façade, or going through some kind of performance – a theme strongly emphasized in *Buddenbrooks*.

Before the Baron's birthday party, one of the children, leaning over

'Marlene Dietrich'

a balustrade, exclaims at the excitement this year of being not, as last year, a spectator, but a performer. As the family appear one by one, the ritual courtesies are interchanged despite the secret rivalry and antagonism that exists between them. By speaking the truth at dinner, Herbert Thallman disrupts the careful façade and breaks up the party. Driving to the party, Friederich Bruckmann is primed on how to act his part in order to best play his hand, as if he is an actor and Aschenbach, his instructor, a director. The passionate scene between Friederich and Sophie is staged, part of a premeditated plan. After the murder of Baron Joachim, Konstantin delivers a hypocritical speech of sympathy to Martin whilst the well-rehearsed to Martin acts as a puppet for his mother in dispensing with his uncle's services and placing Friederich in control of the firm. This scene takes place in front of the red lit stage, emphasizing the theatrical aspect of the situation. The murdered Baron's funeral is an elaborately staged show of grief – incidentally, one of the most impressive scenes of the film, almost the only colour used being black, white and flesh. The ruthless ambitious Sophie, heavily veiled, dabs at her eyes, supported by the lover she knows to be responsible for the death of her father. The tart's bedroom in the slum house is like a stage set covering up the adjacent drab reality. During the SA orgy sequence, individuals step outside like figures in a play to comment on the political situation before returning inside. Behind them the buildings look like cardboard scenery with the space in front like part of a stage.

Costumes and settings may, on the whole, be authentic but Visconti's use of lighting becomes less naturalistic and more consciously melodramatic as the film goes on. Martin's confrontation with his mother is lit with a sickly green light. The rape scene had a strong chiaroscura effect. Sophie, on the bed, is bathed in blue light as the dark figure of her son advances from the shadows. The style of acting is increasingly high flown. The action has the momentum of theatrical drama rather than the leisurely time schemes of the novel, evinced in *Buddenbrooks.* The acting is operatic rather than dramatic. Dirk Bogarde, who plays Friederich has said that the film is more opera than anything else. He relates how one day Visconti watched something he was doing and objected: 'No, no, no, stop, stop. This isn't Parsifal.'[15] Inevitably, Visconti alternating in the roles of film director and director of plays and opera, brings something of his concerns with other media into his current preoccupation:

> 'I know what people say about me every now and then, that my films are a bit on the theatrical side and my stage productions a bit filmic. All methods are good. I don't think the theatre ought to reject techniques if they serve a useful purpose. I don't think the cinema should reject these either so long as they work.'[16]

He cites Méliès as a distinguished forerunner in the theatrical

tradition. He might also cite, to some effect, Rossellini's fine film in the operatic tradition, *Viva L'Italian.* Originally titled *Paisa 1860.* This commemorates the liberation of Italy from the Germans. Like Visconti, Rossellini approaches his subject by analogy – in this case Garibaldi's liberation of Italy.

When Visconti describes the manner in which he works, his artistic eclecticism becomes clearer. Talking about himself as a stylist, he uses the cases of Fellini or Verdi indiscriminately to make an analogy. Shooting a film for Visconti is like writing a book:

> 'I decide on the floor what I am to do. . . . I never see the rushes when I work. . . . I see them at the end or when I have finished a long scene. I think that is probably the way to write a book too. If you can write you put it away and then after a certain time you look at what you write and you can correct. I can't correct. What is made is made. I can't go back. It is very different for other directors.'[17]

He insists:

> 'Cutting is not the most important moment. . . . My cutting is already made in some way. I never make changes in cutting. It is all finished.'[18]

It seems as if he approaches filming rather like a performance in the theatre he might direct, which, once played, cannot be corrected by the director.

The suggestion of impending doom in the ominous smoke and flames of the opening shot, and the ill-fated marriage which leads to death, are straight out of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* itself. We are reminded of the way Visconti uses Verdi in his earlier operatic film *Senso.* This begins with a performance of *Il Trovatore* in Venice – we are told it is Spring 1866 and that the Austrian occupation of Italy is coming to an end. The camera moves between stage and audience until the chorus begins a call to arms. The audience is roused to demonstrate in favour of the national cause and there is considerable confusion out of which an Italian patriot challenges an Austrian officer to a duel. The camera movement between stage and audience and the effect of the opera in inciting action amongst the audience sets the tone of the whole film. Visconti has said that he wished to show the way in which the melodrama of the stage carried over into the action of the audience and principal characters of the film.[19]

In *The Damned,* Visconti once again makes use of this kind of interplay between the associations of Wagnerian romantic epic and the behaviour of those it inspires. Significantly, there is no musical reference to Wagner. The performance on stage which leads into a wider performance, again including the spectators, is an amateur concert. In place of the heroic Brunnhilde we are shown not merely a contemporary sex symbol, Dietrich, but a debased pastiche of her

appearance and performance. The song Martin sings as Dietrich comes from *The Blue Angel*, a film which deliberately presents its characters as actors and is concerned with the sado-masochistic humiliation of a man by a woman. This film was itself based on a novel by Heinrich Mann, a writer whose work picked out the vices of bourgeois Germany. Incidentally, the name of Heinrich Mann coupled with that of Thomas Mann is the first to be read out in the list of banned authors. The phrase in the song *'ein en richtigen Mann'*, frequently repeated by Martin in *The Damned* seems in this context to indicate the need for a Hitler figure. The implication appears to be, that the humiliation of Martin by his Mother, analogous to that of Herr Unrath by Lola-Lola, is a symptom of a state of mind peculiarly receptive to Nazism. Thus through its cinematic and literary associations, Martin's act symbolizes something of the state of German bourgeois society.

The children who talk about the excitement of being performers rather than spectators are drilled to fit into the occasion with a parrot recitation just as they are later used as pawns and imprisoned in Dachau in order to lure their father back to Germany. Guenther takes refuge from life in playing one of Bach's cello suites. Through his music he tries to retreat from participation in the family business, but later, forced to conffont Friedrich's treachery he becomes a Nazi, out of the despair of total disillusionment. The concert is an implicit comment on German mores and culture. Most of the music we hear in the film is popular and trivial. Visconti shows us something of a culture which has absorbed certain of the characteristics of Wagner's heroes – ambition, treachery, lust and ruthlessness without the vital redeeming element of the music itself. Similarly, Friederich, Visconti's Macbeth figure, inherits the ambition, guilt and weakness of his prototype without the intensity of imagination and power of verbal expression which lifts Shakespeare's character to the ranks of the tragic heroes.

The structure of *The Damned* is much closer to the theatrical *Macbeth* pattern than to the novelistic one of *Buddenbrooks*, since Friederich provides the central driving force against which the others react, and the phases of his rise and fall reflect those of Macbeth. Friederich loses control just as he seems most secure, at the family dinner to which Herbert Thallman's 'ghost' returns, when Bruckmann attempts to assert his headship of the family. But the signs of moral regeneration embodied in the figure of Malcolm at the end of *Macbeth* are ignored by Visconti in favour of an ironic Wagnerian ending in which the lovers are united in death, not with the exaltation of a Siegfried and Brunnhilde but with a hopeless resignation. Sophie's corpse is still seen sitting on the settee, looking slightly absurd in such surroundings, as if she has inadvertently fallen asleep during a formal tea

party. Writing about *Senso*, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith suggested that Visconti's characters Franz and Livia are being judged by the 'purer artistic standard' of Verdi's Leonora and Manrico

> 'as well as by the standards of every day. It is more important to observe from that standpoint how far they fall short, than it is to niggle from the standpoint of *petit-bourgeois* realism at the way they seem unreally exalted above the social and psychological norm.'[20]

This kind of judgement might well be applied to *The Damned* in relation to its stylistic association with Wagner's opera and Shakespeare's play.

In *Vaghe Stelle dell'Orsa*, which was also an attempt to uncover the facts and resolve the guilt of the past era of fascism, Visconti made an analogy with the buried hatred, incestuous desires, madness and death-wishes of a family group. Such imagery is not arbitrarily chosen. In popular mythology, sexual decadence causes the decay of a culture, as with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah or the Fall of the Roman Empire. *The Damned* is structurally more complex than *Vaghe Stelle*. As opera, it highlights certain strongly drawn dramatic themes and ostensibly ignores 'irrelevant' incident and details. In *Senso*, Visconti made an implicit comparison between the simplified outlines of *Il Trovatore* and the history of Franz and Livia which is simultaneously grand and petty. In *The Damned* what is virtually ignored is shown to be of equal importance with what is emphasized. The grand passion and Wagnerian heroics of the Nazi order survive only through a studied blindness to what is going on beneath the surface. The Essenbeck house in which most of the action takes place is an enclosed world, protected on the whole by wealth and privilege. Visconti's use of colour throughout the film reflects this idea. The interiors of the house are all in rich mellow shades and windows are usually shrouded by heavy curtains. Exterior shots frequently have a predominance of austere black and white. At the beginning, much play is made on keeping up the appearance of family solidarity and the two little girls are treated with apparent great affection by their adult relatives, but when the party has been broken up by the political events, the children wander off with Martin and play hide and seek. Martin entices the elder girl to hide with him under a large table where he is seen kissing her. A governess begins to look for her but she cannot be found. Later, we see the old Baron Joachim in bed, awakened with a start by a piercing female scream. After looking round for a few moments, he relaxes again. Visconti then cuts to a close-up of Martin's face, half hidden in black shadow, his eyes staring. In the dramatic events following Joachim's own murder this incident is lost. In the light of the subsequent revelation of Martin's sexual attraction towards little girls and his attempts to seduce the Jewish child Lisa, we can only assume that the scream

heard comes from the child Thilda who has been raped by Martin. No explanation is offered Such avoidance of unsavoury detail forms another of the films leitmotifs, and is particularly associated with Martin. Early on in the film he shows himself to be a good potential Nazi. When his impersonation of Marlene Dietrich is interrupted by the news of the burning of the Reichstag, he tries, inappropriately, to continue his act and is enraged when this is not allowed. After his attempted seduction of Lisa, he turns up the radio to drown her cries as she is being punished in the next room. The child's suicide causes no stir except in so far as Konstantin uses it to try and blackmail Martin, but as Aschenbach informs him, he need not have worried since the child is Jewish and therefore fair game. At another point in the film, Sophie apparently agrees to allow Elisabeth Thallman (Charlotte Rampling) and her children to escape and join their father, a liberal, hostile to the Nazis, who has been framed for the Baron's murder. Subsequently, when Thallman suddenly appears at the dinner-table we learn that they had been sent to Dachau where Elisabeth has died. No concern is shown, and when the children are returned to the house, their freedom bought by their father's agreeing to give himself up, they slip indoors silently, wearing sombre grey in place of their blue frilled party dresses. No fuss or particular welcome is made. It is almost as if they had never been away. Similarly, after Martin has raped his mother, nothing is said of the incident. A nurse co-operates in keeping her under constant sedation and she and Friederich passively accept their roles. But the deliberate ignoring of unpleasant facts is not shown to be the sole prerogative of Nazi sympathizers. In one scene, Guenther is brought before his headmaster for having corresponded with his Uncle, Herbert Thallman. The headmaster tries to keep up an appearance of strict neutrality and clearly does not wish to offend anyone in power. When Guenther tries to argue his Uncle's case, the headmaster insists that he does not want to know about it. Seen in this context, Herbert Thallman's indictment of liberal apathy for the rise of Nazism is no mere 'sop . . . of social commentary' but an explicit statement of what is implicit in much of the action of the film. The crime of ignoring what it is more comfortable not to see, reflects the familiar post-war German chorus that under the Nazis no one knew what was really going on.

The Damned is almost certainly not one of Visconti's major films. He admits that it was hastily prepared. The English dialogue, delivered in a motley assortment of European accents is flat, stilted and sometimes banal. The effect of the German sequence, subtitled in English, for the SA vacation is, to say the least, bizarre. Dirk Bogarde, a constitutionally lightweight actor is badly miscast. Generally speaking, the script lacks the substance and complexity to match Visconti's dazzling style. His original idea of adapting

Buddenbrooks might have been more successful. Nevertheless, *The Damned* does not deserve to be hawked around as a peg on which to hang the latest fashion any more than to be reviled as an irresponsible chronicle of sexual perversion and brutality. Visconti's characteristic strength in handling groups, creative use of colour and camera movement together with the absorbing use of visual and thematic leitmotif will undoubtedly lead to a reappraisal of his achievement in this film.

CREDITS FOR THE DAMNED

Friederich Bruckmann: DIRK BOGARDE, Baroness Sophie: INGRID THULIN, Aschenbach: HELMUT GRIEM, Martin: HELMUT BERGER, Guenther: RENAUD VERLEY, Herbert Thallman: UMBERTO ORSINI, Baron Konstantin: RENE KOLLDEHOFF, Baron Joachim: ALBRECHT SCHOENHALS, Governess: NORA RICCI, Lisa Keller: IRINA WANKA, Thilda: VALENTINA RICCI, Erika: KAREN MITTENDORF, Olga: FLORINDA BOLKAN, Elisabeth Thallman: CHARLOTTE RAMPLING. *Executive Producer:* PIETRO NOTARIANNI, *Producer:* ALFREDO LEVY and EVER HAGGIAG, *Director:* LUCHINO VISCONTI, *Screenplay:* NICOLA BADALUCCO, ENRICO MEDIOLI and LUCHINO VISCONTI, *Art Director* and *Set Designer:* PASQUALE ROMANO, *Director of Photography:* ARMANDO NANUZZI and PASQUALE DE SANTIS. *Editor:* RUGGERO MASTROIANNI, *Cameramen:* NINO CRISTIANI, GIUSEPPE BERNARDINI. *Music:* MAURICE JARRE, *Costume Designer:* PIERO TOSI. Technicolor, 'X' Cert. Running Time: 2 hrs. 32 mts.

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ABRAHAM POLONSKY

interviewed by

JIM COOK & KINGSLEY CANHAM

JC: What was the attraction of Communism for American intellectuals in the thirties and forties?

AP: Well I think it would be wrong to say the attraction of *Communism* for the American intellectuals – it's the attraction of radical political activity – because a great many intellectuals became followers of Leon Trotsky – a great many intellectuals became radical socialists, and a great many more became attracted to standard Communism. They were all attracted to some form of Leftish activity. I think you've missed the point to say just Communism – because that's the way the McCarthy committee talked about it – you've got to get the spectrum that was going on. There were several obvious reasons – one was the Great Depression which proved that Capitalism was a disaster when it didn't work. The most important thing was the appalling lies of Fascism and the terrifying notion that there was only one country that would ever fight them – the Soviet Union – the feeling was that the others were going to sell out all along the line. And for those American intellectuals who were Jewish – there were the Nazis' concentration camps, for which they were destined obviously at some point – either by American Fascists or German Fascists. If that didn't drive people to political activity nothing will.

JC: How much of this concern was reflected in films of the period?

AP: It was reflected in all the films, especially in the films of those who weren't radicals, because they were freer from self-censorship. I think a lot of radical writers pick an attitude that you might call progressive or democratic and encourage democracy in good relations and good feelings – because they know that you can't get any radical activity in films. People who aren't radicals don't know that; so they had the tendency to push stuff in, Frank Capra did anything he felt like – and he's a conservative – or John

Willie Boy on the run

Ford might do something tremendous, as in that film based on Steinbeck's . . . *Grapes of Wrath.*

But it would be a lie to say that American left wingers didn't do pictures with radical activity. They did pictures with humanist content and the flavour of democracy.

JC: Why did the 1947 hearings of the Committee of Un-American activities last only 2 weeks and end after only 10 of the 19 witnesses had been called?

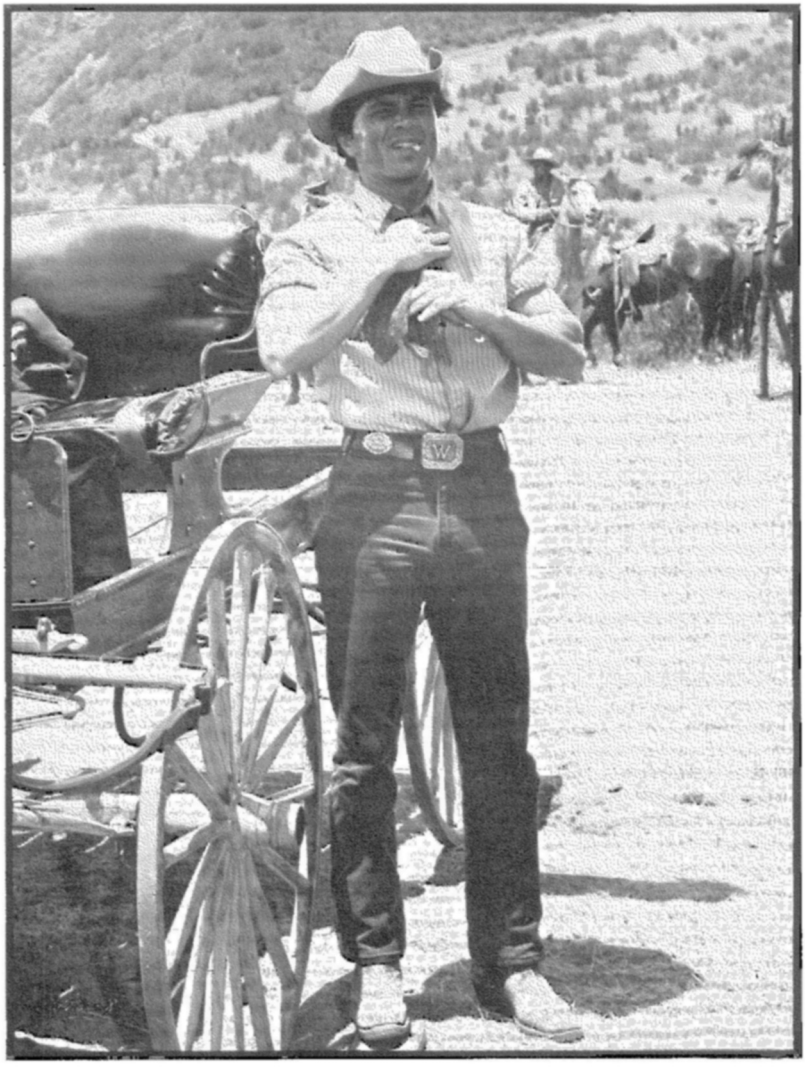
AP: Because at the beginning, the whole of the film industry decided to resist the attack by the House of Un-American Activities Committee. A committee in Hollywood was formed called the Committee of First Amendment, and its chairman was John Huston. He, Willie Wyler and Philip Dunne gathered the full strength of the Hollywood community against the committee, so when these 19 were subpoenaed and summoned to Washington, a plane load of Hollywood stars including Humphrey Bogart and Danny Kaye and many others went to see that these people had a fair hearing. It became such a row that the hearings were called off.

JC: The Committee for the First Amendment had issued certain statements after John Howard Lawson said in court that it was America that was on trial and not the ten people involved in the hearings. Do you feel that anybody connected with the Committee was in any way using it? Were there any Communists involved?

AP: Well the only left wingers involved were me – maybe a few

others. If we hadn't associated with the Amendment, we wouldn't have been subpoenaed. The committee for the First Amendment was ripped asunder when the thing exploded in Washington. General Beadle Smith was sent to Hollywood and he met the important Hollywood owners. A policy was laid down to call these actors and directors off – the important ones. Pressure was put on them through their agents and the whole thing melted in about two weeks. I finally went to a meeting of the Committee of the First Amendment and Humphrey Bogart turned around and looked up a half empty room; the first meetings were held at

Tell them Willie Boy is Here



George Chasen's and you couldn't get in – it was like an opening night at the opera – everybody wanted to be in on this. Anyway Humphrey Bogart looked round this room and said: 'You don't think I'm going to stand up there all by myself and take a beating – I'm getting out too!', and he said, 'But you ought to be ashamed of yourselves', and he walked out of the room. Then Huston said, 'Well, it's hopeless, fellows', and went to Europe. The final meeting was held and the only people present in the room were Willie Wyler, the permanent secretary, myself and one other. Wyler said, 'Well I think we can use our time better than this!' And it was true.

KC: Why the predominance of Hollywood writers in the ten? Nine were writers.

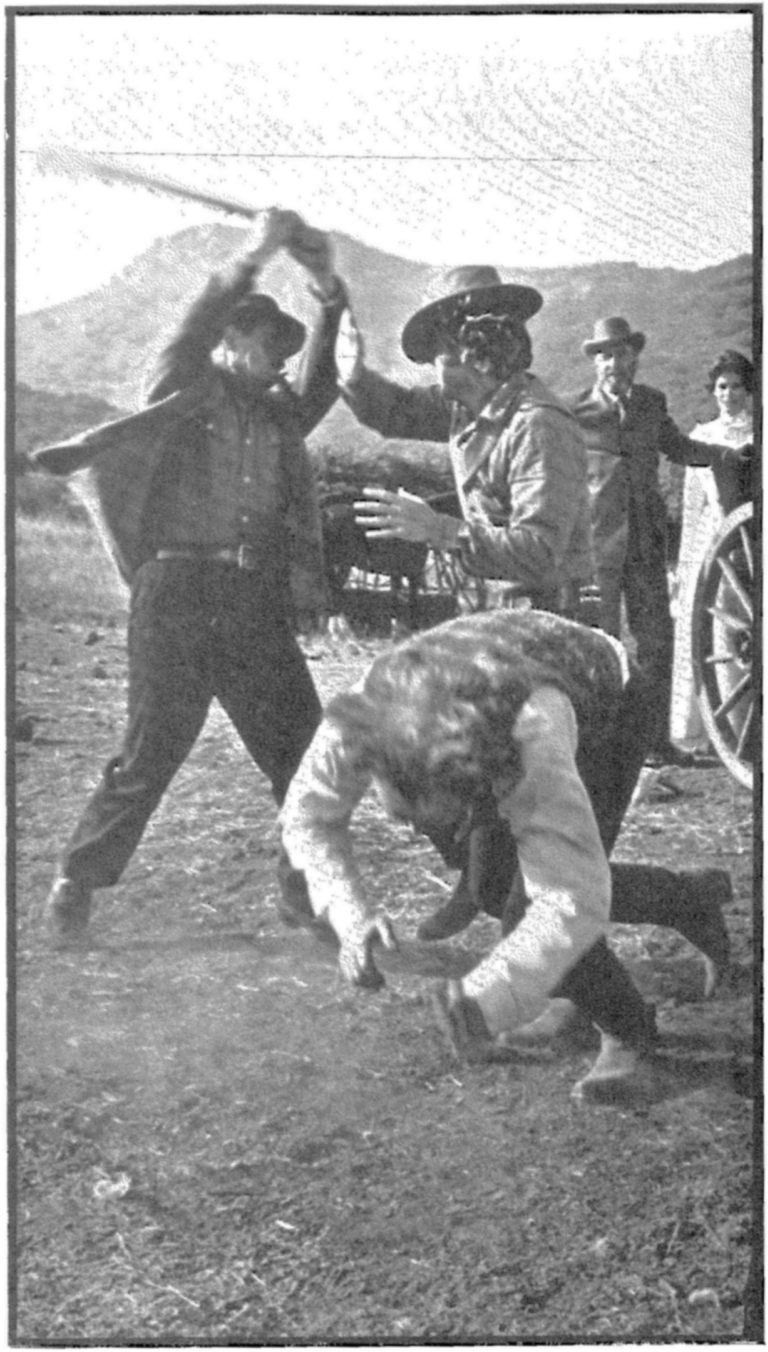
AP: Accident. Of the 300 people black-listed, there were some actors and some directors and some producers and a lot of writers, because the writers are the heart and soul of the industry.

JC: From a public relations point of view, was the black-list inevitable once the Committee had started smearing names?

AP: It was inevitable once the Committee for the First Amendment was destroyed. Because there was then no support for these people. A black-list exists only if no one opposes it and if the only ones who oppose it are the people who are black-listed then whoever opposes the black-list becomes black-listed too, which happened to many New York writers who are not even incidentally connected with politics. Ira Wolfert who wrote the book from which they made *Force of Evil* is a newspaper journalist, and by no stretch of imagination can he be called anything but an ordinary American with ordinary American attitudes. I might call him a populist from time to time – but he's a very fair kind of fellow. He signed one of the advertisements that appeared in the *New York Times* protesting against the black-list and then discovered he'd lost all his military security clearances for his newspaper work. It took him nearly two years to get it cleared up because you can never find out who's black-listing you. I'll go further. His son – more than twenty years later – was about to be hired by the United Nations and found out he couldn't get security clearance, and when it was traced and found out, it went back all the ways to the first one against his father. That's the way the black-list operates. That's the secret of it – it has no end.

JC: Was it fear of black-listing that led people like Sterling Hayden and Robert Rossen to publicly recant before they'd been called?

AP: No! They were already black-listed – they knew they were going to be called, and they recanted before they were called because that



Robert Redford takes care of two bootleggers in *Willie Boy*

was part of the deal they made with the Committee. Actually Rossen was one of the 19 – he resisted the Committee – went off to Mexico – made speeches against it and so on. It was some years later he came back and became an informer. And Sterling Hayden had been in touch with the FBI long before he was called by the Committee.

JC: Do you think that pressure groups such as the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals contributed to the 1951 hearings re-opening?

AP: All those kind of pressure groups contribute and play a role in it – not necessarily everybody in those groups, but the group as a whole, or whoever runs the group, because they're in touch in hearings with the people they're black-listing.

JC: What was the function of the Grey List set up by the American Legion, whereby people wrote letters instead of appearing publicly?

AP: Once you have a black-list, you have a white list – that is those people who aren't on the black-list. People you can't tell what they are – they're on the Grey List. Now these people who are on the Grey List are very often people who really aren't on the Grey List – they're on the white list – but they're unsure of themselves, and if they don't get jobs for a certain amount of time, they begin to worry that maybe they're on some list. (You never doubt your talent, you doubt your ability to get the job for some strange reason.) So these security clearances were set up not only by the American Legion, but by all kinds of private operators who wrote and read little magazines and little newspapers and so on. It became a very important business – for instance names were sold, back and forth. When there was any kind of meeting or anything of a good cause of which they approve – they put everybody's name down. These people might find themselves in trouble and Red Channels would write 'Would you like to clear yourselves?' They would charge and so it became a racket – one of the biggest rackets in America. It occurred in the unions, in the schools, in the entertainment industry, and with government jobs, and so there were official black-listers and unofficial black-listers.

JC: How do you feel about the witnesses who did co-operate, such as Rossen and Kazan, giving the names of 324 people who were working in the industry, and how were you yourself immediately affected by the black-listing?

AP: Well, the second part first. The moment I was called before the committee I was black-listed. It travelled with the speed of light. I was working for 20th Century Fox. Before my name even

appeared in the newspapers, I was called up. 'Hey, Polonsky! What's going on?' And I told them, and it was suggested to me that I should co-operate with the committee. I said I wasn't going to. But 20th Century Fox was extremely fair – they didn't fire me. And even after I didn't co-operate they still didn't fire me. They only fired me after several weeks of editorials in Hollywood papers, and especially in the Hollywood Reporter saying 'What's Polonsky doing – still working at 20th Century Fox?'

I think all the studios would have resisted as hard if they hadn't been smashed from much higher pressures. Paramount could have resisted, but there were people at Paramount who were on this Motion Picture Alliance. There was nobody at Fox I don't think – Darryl Zanuck was very independent. He said 'I'd like to keep you, I'll try – but when the pressure gets too tough I have to let you go, because I can't take it.'

KC: About the witnesses who did name names to keep working in the industry or for other motives?

AP: I think it was unfortunate – for them, not so much for us because we'd been named so many times by so many different people. Robert Rossen's ability as a film-maker and Kazan's is not affected by the fact that on this one occasion both of them acted in what I consider a very bad way. I'm indifferent to them – that's all I can say. One of them is dead – I can't be more indifferent than that; Kazan is still alive and I'm still indifferent to him. I've been asked about him many times – I wish him luck. He needs it.

JC: In the light of what you were just saying about Fox – how true is Trumbo's remark in *The Nation* in 1957 'that the studios hedged their bets and whilst operating a black-list were in the market purchasing plays and other material without crediting the authors'.

AP: Well, by 1957 it was widespread. It wasn't true in 1950 and '51 It began to be true about 1953 or 1954 – suspicions spread in Hollywood, some of the top writers were winning awards for studios under fake names, and at that point the black market price rose considerably and there was great competition for certain of the black-listed names – so by 1957 Trumbo was telling the truth.

JC: Do you feel that fear of Communist infiltration was ever genuine, if paranoid, on the part of the members of the Committee – or was it, from the start, a fairly cynical witch hunt?

AP: Don't know the members of the Committee – I can't say, but Parnell Thomas turned out to be a crook – so I would assume it

was cynical on his part, although crooks can be paranoid; maybe that's why he got caught. Congressman Veldy didn't get re-elected the next year. I would say that even if you weren't paranoid about the fear of Communism, by 1952 or 1953 you would be – even if you were normal – because you heard nothing else. America was about to be destroyed from within and from without, and somehow this all happened while we were taking over the British Empire.

KC: Even in 1950, about July, magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek* were saying McCarthy's a crank. . . .

AP: *Time* thought him a crank from the beginning, but what happened to America in general on a large political scale is what happened to the Hollywood motion picture companies on a small scale during the time of the Committee of the First Amendment. The first reaction was to fight it off as being motivated by out-and-out reactionaries. But when they saw the wave of power that came down they backed off from it. That created a void into which all the victims fell, like Satan in Heaven into the depths of Hell, endlessly day after day. As they began to realize that this witch hunt was based on a fatal misconception, on which was the Korean War, and as McCarthy became more paranoid and started to surround himself with wilder and wilder specimens of American futility, like those two characters Schein and Cohn that worked for him (Cohn by the way has just beaten another felony rap for being a crook), he began to attack General George Marshall as a Communist and Eisenhower as someone highly Communist in the government. The government struck back and wiped him out. Of course, by then, Murrow had delivered his very famous television broadcast, but simultaneously with the tapering off of the cold war, as America and Russia began to stabilize their fears of each other. It was no longer hysterical, it became like it is today. I mean, we all expect to be destroyed but it's pretty ordinary. In those days they thought it was extraordinary, and were frightened.

JC: In view of your black-listing why have you remained living in the United States during the past 20 years?

AP: Well, I got black-listed in the United States and they lifted my passport, so the only way I could leave the United States was to steal out and become stateless. It never occurred to me to try and get out once they took away my passport, because I had no personal fear of anything happening to me, like happened in Fascist Germany, because the United States at the very height of this whole period was a remarkably free country. This contradiction and paradox has to be understood, otherwise you don't understand Americans. Anyone who stayed in Nazi Germany and

didn't either join the underground or run is an idiot. The United States wasn't like that. We've fought against them openly all this time, never stopped. No one arrested us – no one went to jail except the ten – and they were caught on a technicality. It had to do with them taking a wrong position, by accident, in front of the Committee. They were held in contempt of Congress and knocked back by the Supreme Court which later reversed its position. But then it was too late, they'd been to jail.

JC: Do you consider yourself a political person, like Lawson naïvely was, or say, Godard is today?

AP: I don't know whether Lawson's naïve or not. He is a political person of some sort and Godard is a political person of some sort and I fall between them. I consider life as a political action. But I don't think politics is systematically and structurally as narrow as Lawson might be considered to have thought. I don't think he thought of it that way but he was considered to.

JC: I used the word naïvely because he tended to make his views public – and loudly public.

AP: Lawson, like a great many people, always thinks he's speaking for the rest of us. Everybody would be much better off if we just spoke for ourselves. He's a very brave man, Lawson; he's to be respected for that and he was once – he's a very old man now – a marvellous writer – and created the whole school of play-writing of which Clifford Odets is the flower.

KC: Could you describe the process of 'ghosting' – ghost writing? Are you normally approached by the credited writer – or the director or the producer or the company?

AP: In the early stages of it, you used your friends to get you introductions to guys who were already using black-listed people, or you would go to people who know you very well and who would be tempted to help you and would want to use you and are not too frightened to do so. Later, the producers started going to the writers. All the writers whose names you used, if they were real writers, usually did it just as a friendly favour and courted disaster. The work that appeared under their name wasn't theirs, so no matter what happened, good, bad or indifferent, there was a psychological problem for them. Black-listed writers created lots of problems that way – I know I did. It was much better to use a pseudonym, but sometimes you couldn't. We worked on everything we could work on. One film I did has been recognized. When I was in Paris someone said, 'Did you write that picture?' I said, 'How did you know about that?' He said, 'Well, the director told somebody in Hollywood.'

JC: How did your work on *Madigan* and *Willie Boy* come about, and did any personal organization argue against your employment on those films?

AP: I'll tell you one mild report I have on some opposition, I don't know if it's true or not, but I might as well tell it to you since it doesn't concern me whether they like it or not. A man – a Hollywood producer – at Universal, by the name of Frank Rosenberg, who was the producer of *Madigan*, approached me about two years before *Madigan* and asked me to write a television pilot based on the work of the office of strategic services in France and Germany and so on. I didn't waste much time and said I wouldn't do it, because I thought he meant I should do it under a pseudonym, and I was working in the movies under a pseudonym and it pays much better. So he said, 'You can put your name on it,' and of course I accepted, especially as it was at Universal which was the major studio in Hollywood at that time. If I got cleared at Universal then I was cleared for everyone. I know I was still black-listed because my name was suggested for two jobs by Martin Ritt and turned down in both cases. I was turned down on the grounds that you should get somebody else who would be better. Now I hear that when my name was submitted to one of the networks by Rosenberg, the network did not turn me down, but said: 'Why don't you find someone else who's more familiar with TV and stuff like this; as far as we know Polonsky has never done any TV.' Of course I had done a considerable amount at that time including *Seaway*. TV at that time was under the jurisdiction of Jennings Lang who picked up the telephone and called up this network and said: 'Look, we're going to use Polonsky anyway. You do what you feel like!' I came out to California to work on it and was greeted very warmly by both Lang and Rosenberg, so they obviously both had something to do with it. I went to work and did this TV pilot. I went home. I was working on something else and Rosenberg called me and said: 'Could you do a re-write on *Madigan*?' I found out that an acquaintance, Howard Rodman, had worked on a first press, and naturally I called him up and said: 'What's going on?' and Rodman said: 'I don't talk to him and he doesn't talk to me – if you want to write it it's O.K. with me, because I'm not going to work on it any more.' Not only did Rosenberg get me to do the script, but he got me the same salary that I was getting the day I quit in Hollywood which was considerable.

KC: Did you work with Siegel at all on the script, or did Siegel just take the final script to shoot?

AP: You, of course, have seen Siegel's pieces on his experiences with

Frank Rosenberg. Now Rosenberg was the man who got me cleared of the black-list, so I think he's a fine fellow. But he did have difficulties with Siegel. Now the difficulties with Siegel came from the fact that Siegel was trying to make a movie and didn't care who the producer was. He thought it was his movie to make. But Rosenberg had been working on the project for several years and considered he was the producer in an old-fashioned Hollywood way, and that was what the problem was. Rosenberg also likes to write a little bit, and that was the real source of the difficulty, because obviously when Siegel saw the script, which I had re-written, it was obvious there were some parts which I hadn't written. There's some parts still in it which I didn't write. Siegel got up-tight about it and said: 'Let me get to work with Polonsky, and we'll get to work on this thing,' but Rosenberg didn't want that. That was the source of the difficulty.

KC: Were these the sections featuring Henry Fonda?

AP: Mostly, because Frank Rosenberg's idea of the Commissioner is somewhat exalted, and Don Siegel's and mine is less exalted, and it would have been better.

JC: What are your views on the underground and/or political cinema like *Newsreel*?

AP: Imagine making like forty films in a year – two reels and one reel – I don't care what they're about any more, at this point, and since it's mostly propaganda reportage on actual events taking place in the United States, some of the longer ones are marvellous like the Columbia* one, some of the shorter ones are hair-raising – I think it's just wonderful – it's genuine cinema. . . . When I was at the University of Southern California, I showed them *Willie Boy*. One of the questions that came up right away from the 400 to 500 students was: 'Do you think a propaganda film can be a work of art?' and I thought that was a foolish question to ask because the answer is: 'Yes, of course – obviously.' There's no exclusivity in any of this except bad films which all fit the same category.

KC: Is the black-list still operative?

AP: Not the black-list that I was on, but the new black-lists, which I probably am on too, are fully operative, but they're not operative in the movies. They're mostly operative against very young people, who protest in peace movements and are physicists or chemists and then try to get jobs with the government or in some of the large industries – all of whom have war contracts. They can't get security clearance and it may prevent them from getting jobs in certain universities – I don't know whether that's true or

* *Columbia Revolt.*

false. They're also operative against all Nobel Prize winners who find their name on black-lists in The Department of Education and Welfare. There are security offices in every organization in America. What do security officers do? They make black-lists. They say these people ought to be trusted – those people ought not to be.

KC: Could you comment on your connections with Orson Welles in radio? Were you connected with the Mercury theatre for instance?

AP: I was not, but a friend of mine, Bernard Herrman, the composer, was doing the music for Orson Welles, and I was not writing for television or anything. I considered myself a serious novelist about to come to birth, and Herrmann introduced me to Houseman, and they asked me if I would do a show for them – that's the way it started.

KC: How did you actually come to enter films in 1939?

AP: I didn't enter films till after the war, but I signed the contract before the war was over. I'd received a number of inquiries about me coming out to Hollywood, and just before I went overseas, I received another such inquiry from Paramount. I accepted it on the grounds that it might be a good thing to have when I came back. That's how I got into the movies.

KC: Were the novels written in a naturalistic frame, similar to Odets?

AP: They were not. They were very classical.

KC: Are your films pre-conceived and pre-rehearsed or does the image-word-actor tie-up result from the editing process?

AP: The film scripts pretty well suggest the kind of film it's going to be. The style that I use in *Force of Evil* is not my habitual writing style, but one that I thought was appropriate for that film. It's partly based on the way the book is written, but it's different also. What I did was have Wolfert write the first draft screen play after we had discussed it. I wrote the second draft myself and asked him how he liked it and he said: 'Great.' You can recognize my style as a writer whether I'm writing essays or something else, *Force of Evil,* or the non-dialogue I have in *Willie Boy.* After all, repetition, like metaphor and things like that, is a technical device, and technical devices sometimes become so much a part of the writer or director or painter that they become identified with his content and even his nature. But I think my range is much wider than the range of *Force of Evil.* The director must edit his film. Obviously he must edit it with an editor. In Hollywood you have

to because of the union and sometimes you have to because you don't know the technique, but the film is the editing too. I can't imagine that you'd turn your film over to another and say: 'See what you can make of it, old boy,' and go away. I work very closely with the editor; I take all the suggestions and consider them, but then I take the suggestions from everyone who works with me – my camera-man, my actors especially, obviously, my costumer, my make-up man and art director. Everybody is very creative and full of talent, but it's my film they're making, and in that sense I think the editor is part of a director's film-making process.

KC: *Force of Evil* wasn't a commercially successful novel. Presumeably your producers must have had some fears about handling this as a first film on your part?

AP: Fear is the wrong word. Absolute terror. However *Force of Evil* was a terrific hit. I thought it was a good gangster picture and they went along with it. Bob Roberts, who was the actual producer, wasn't frightened. It was the financiers who were slightly terrorized, but I had the support of the star and I had the background of *Body and Soul.*

KC: I think there's ambiguity that's represented in the roles of your heroes, for instance in *Body and Soul*, where William Pechter has said Garfield is a combination of tough cynicism and urban dreaminess without awareness, and in *Force of Evil* there's the same combination, yet he has an awareness so this becomes a perversion of strength, and then in *Willie Boy* – Willie Boy is a combination of natural skill and cunning, and he has an awareness of white attitudes, and also of a ritualistic element of his position with regard to his own people.

AP: Well, first of all I probably have a natural tendency which is impossible to escape. I present the contrary in every case, and that lends an air of suspicion to everything I do. In *Willie Boy* unlike *Force of Evil* – it's not deliberate. *Force of Evil* is bathed in ambiguity; in *Willie Boy*, the whole thing is bathed in clarity in order to trap you in the ambiguities; it's a different technique, but it's only technical, the difference, I would say.

KC: The score in *Willie Boy* is especially prominent. I don't remember it being as prominent in *Force of Evil.* Could you comment?

AP: When I made *Force of Evil*, I must have made the whole thing in a blind frenzy. Bob Aldrich reports in some kind of interview he gave in *Sight and Sound* that in *Body and Soul* I was a pain in the neck, because I was around trying to get everybody to make this

movie correctly, and he would have thrown me off the set. But, of course, Rossen couldn't throw me off the set. I was his boss, since I became partners with Garfield. Now what happened in *Force of Evil* was that Aldrich was my assistant, as was Don Weis, so I was surrounded by plenty of talent. Richard Day was the art-director, but Bob Roberts tells a story about that: he hired Richard Day to make sketches of the shots and so on but Day was sitting in a chair and I was making sketches of shots. I worked in a kind of strange way in *Force of Evil* – I didn't know what was going on. I told the composer what I wanted, and left it up to him. Raksin's score is excellent, but it's not my idea of what music should be in films. It's what people who like movie music like. I mean people who really like it for its good qualities. In *Willie Boy* it was demonstrated when I went off to Paris with Jennings Lang on some business and I talked to a composer suggested by them. I wanted Dave Gruson to begin with, but he was busy doing another film and they suggested another composer – here nameless – and I told him what I wanted – and I left him just the way I left Raksin, the only difference is that Polonsky who came back from Paris is not the Polonsky who walked in on *Force of Evil.* Polonsky knew what he wanted by now. I listened to the score and it was terrible because it was telling me about the movie and that's not the role of music in a movie. It had already been recorded, and this cost about $75,000. I raised my complaints, and they just took it away. They'll use it in some other picture I suppose, because in Hollywood you can always find a use for music. Then I got Gruson. I sat through the film three times with him – and he went and composed a few themes. We discussed the orchestration and the role of the music in the film and had ten electronic musicians, carefully selected by Gruson. He handed them bits of paper, and they practised a little, and then we ran the film and then he would improvise along with them along with the film, and I would be sitting there saying: 'Too much – No! Very good! It sounds too much like music!' Gruson is totally conscious of what his music is doing. He worked out all kinds of effects and strange things. You've heard the recorder before, but have you heard it with a girl soprano singing in unison? That's what makes that queer sound – that's Gruson's contribution to it. I was the audience who if he didn't applaud had his way. That's the difference between the two scores. Raksin's score is absolutely first class – I like it; but Gruson's score is part of the picture.

KC: The women in your films play a catalystic role rather than functioning as totally central characters. . . .

AP: It happens because it's the men's roles that dominate, but if I

were to do two other films I have written – where the woman's role is central – it may be different.

KC: Why did you choose a Western?

AP: It was partly accidental in a sense that Philip Waxman had come to me with this historical study before I even thought of directing a picture, and I was about to write it for Martin Ritt. When Jennings Lang said: 'We'd like you to direct a film for us, Polonsky' – it was supposed to be a television film by the way – I could have suggested anything. I had several suggestions, but I was already working on this one. One of the reasons it attracted me was this whole question of how we live in America. We live by myths – well all countries live by myths, but we live by myths too, and the sweetheart of America is the Western myth. All our best movies are made like that. Our kids dress up like that. Like all Paradises lost, it never existed, that's the best paradise lost of course – those that didn't exist.

KC: This is the idea of the desert wilderness turning into a garden of Eden?

AP: Our Paradise Lost is the Indian's genocide. It had a different approach to him. It was this American mythology that had turned me into an exile, the way they wanted to see the world – which wasn't exactly like that. I said I would take this myth – the actual incident, which is a true incident, has a resonance with the assassination of John Kennedy – and McKinley had been assassinated only a few years before. Here, they thought that Taft was about to be assassinated by this renegade Indian who's leading an uprising in the desert. None of those are facts. Strangely enough, I probably chose, with a tragic certainty, the exact myth to be treated, because while I was shooting the riverside scene, Bobby Kennedy was assassinated. We were living in the myth, not only telling about it.

KC: About *Force of Evil* – to whom were you referring when you said, 'the people are merged except where I agreed to wrong casting'?

AP: Well there were several characters – the wife of Tucker for instance, Marie Windsor was wrong. She was suggested by Ironfell who said: 'Come on, what difference does it make?' She was surrounded by considerable actors and she couldn't carry it. She doesn't give the effect and that was wrong casting. There were several others but the major casting in the film was pretty good, not all chosen by me. Beatrice Pearson was suggested by Martin Jarow. He became a producer and had a very good eye for people, he knew about her. She was absolutely perfect though

she vanished after making a couple of films. She had personal psychological problems.

KC: Could you comment more fully on your recent description of a film set as a more complex writing experience?

AP: I think that all directors are writers – all, without exception. Now some of them can't write unfortunately – as a matter of fact they can't write as a matter of technique, as a matter of control – but they are writers. They take writers and bash their heads together and pull scripts apart and push them together and get other writers. I start out with the assumption that the writing experience is continuous with the directing experience, from the director's point of view. But that's not true from the writer's point of view because there are writers who are probably not ever going to be directors, although almost all of them should want to be. But say a lot of them are not going to be directors, they won't be able to handle actors. So I would say that all writers are not directors, but all directors are writers. Unfortunately, most directors are bad writers, but they must write, because that's the only way you can make a film. The directors were also writers in silent films, but they don't have to be such a good writer as you have to be when the people talk to each other, because the ability to write dialogue is a specific gift. You either have it or you don't. So a director may not have it; he's going to have to get someone to write dialogue, but he's going to push that stuff around, he's going to mould it and twist it and bother everybody and drive everybody out of their minds. And there are directors who are uncertain of themselves and actors write lines for that reason. They don't know where it should come from and they don't trust writers. Directors don't trust writers. Directors who don't write don't trust writers. Directors who can write will trust them because they understand the process. I think that's what I meant.

KC: Could you talk about your relationship with Conrad Hall? The photography of *Willie Boy* seems to be particularly tightly constructed in its use of lighting, and the light around the actors.

AP: Universal hired him – I didn't. I got him to be my colleague. He was in the South Pacific working with Boorman, who is, I think, one of your best directors. I expect great things from Boorman. Haskell Wexler said: 'Get Conrad Hall.' I'd seen Con's work, so I looked at it again. I called him as he was about to do *The Arrangement*, and I talked him out of it! He was on a ship some place, and we got together when he came back. Kazan was having some problems with Brando at that time – I don't know what problems – but anyhow I got Conrad Hall to do my film. Then Conrad Hall comes with his own whole crew you see. That's

why his stuff is so proficient and lovely. We did two weeks of experimental shooting in the desert, he read the script and agreed with it and was very co-operative. He had been making experiments on his own because he's a creative camera-man. He's going to be a director now. He's preparing *The Wild Palms* by Faulkner. Connie worked out a system of using very fast films – which you use anyway – but he over-exposed it all about two stops, and this would differentiate during the course of the day, as more or less light, more or less colour, because daylight destroys colour in the desert. The printing process was to desaturate the film – of colour. Now this is a complex process from which you balance out the colours on all the different angles and shots and so on, which they do for you. The whole 2,000-ft. roll has to be saturated, which changes all the balances and relations of the colour. It's a long and difficult process, which Technicolor resents bitterly, and the studio resents bitterly because you stay there for months – in my case four months – and I sent back eighteen prints before I agreed on this one, and the one you're seeing here which is very, very good is still not right – because the only one that was ever right was the one I made. So that goes for the daylight stuff. Secondly, all the night stuff was either the day for night, or night for night. It's treated in a separate kind of way. The film was not only desaturated, but all the day for night stuff had black and white prints made and they were printed one upon the other, which gives it the quality that you see. There is also a systematic development of the use of light throughout the whole course of the film, and if you leave out the night stuff you will find that the progress is from intense light to evening, and the scenes are selected to play that way.

KC: Yes. The final shot in the mountains, was that done in the studio?

AP: It was done in the mountains. And those were real rocks, but Conrad Hall stretched canvases over the top, and black cloth. He brought more gear into the desert than he uses on the stages. We had a machine out there – we could have lighted up a city I think – a generator.

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UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES

JIM COOK

This account is only meant to make references in the Abraham Polonsky interview understandable and recognizable.
The history of the several Committees from 1937 to 1966 is dealt with exhaustively in:
The Committee **Walter Goodman, Secker & Warburg, 1969. The Hollywood hearings are given their fullest account in:**
Report on Blacklisting **1. The movies, John Cogley (New York) Fund for the Republic, 1956.**

Although the House Committee on Un-American Activities only turned its attention to Hollywood in 1947, it had been in existence as an embarrassment – and occasionally an arm – to Congress for at least ten years. Congressional investigations of one sort or another stretched back into the twenties. In many ways the earlier investigations were no more than an extension of the mutual recriminations of the major political parties, and, as such, were part of the accepted make-up of American 'dogfight' politics.

However partisan and parochial, inquiries into banks, railroads or the munitions industry were never really sufficient to stir up major passions nor to gibe their prime movers in Congress major coverage in the media. What was needed, therefore, was something over which there was widespread ignorance accompanied by enormous untapped stores of emotionalism. Threats of Communist and/or Fascist plots contained these necessary requisites, and the leaders of the investigating Congressional Committees latched on to them as much for their sensational values as with any real legislative intent.

This element of political wheeler-dealering – which combined a taste for the sensational with gross ignorance of the facts – made the Committee on the one hand almost totally incapable of comprehending what was the exact nature of Communist infiltration in America, and on the other quite capable of ruining people's lives in a grotesque inquisitorial farce, backed by a powerful Right-wing Press and financed by an embarrassed Congress.

The sad irony was that the Committee could ruin people by their investigations but could only suggest alterations in the law and not actually carry them out. This gave them greater power than a legislature could ever have, since they appeared, in their own and their supporters' eyes, as the dis-

interested watchdogs of Democracy, and in their victims' eyes as a paranoia-inducing menace who could continually hound, but rarely capture and formally judge.

Obviously in the Depression Thirties in America, there was a fairly strong Communist Party which exploited economic hardships to gain converts to the cause; but no matter how dispassionate, or even cynical, were the directives from the Comintern, it is undeniable that in many cases it was only the Communists who achieved anything approaching a fair deal for the workers in the unions they controlled.

Behind the hard facts of card-carrying Communist Party members, however, there were many people – often 'intellectuals': writers, teachers, lawyers, etc. – who, seeing the failures of Capitalism all around them, strongly sympathized with the Communists' practical action, if not with their ideology. It was with this group that the Committee was able to cause the most damage. The facts were nebulous and mud forms best on surfaces where there is nothing firm to absorb the dirt. when 'Un-American Activities' could apply – as one of the founders of the Committee, Sam Dickstein, felt it ought – to everybody, and when 'subversive group' meant 'not WASP', the stage was set for the Great American Tragi-Comedy. In 1937, for example, Congressman Taylor of Tennessee, who took public pride in having helped to write the first restrictive immigration law ever placed on the statute books, favoured an investigation of sit-down strikes in Detroit because most of the agitators did not have American names.

During the war years, the Communist threat was forgotten and the Committee devoted its energies to making life uncomfortable for the German-American and Nisei communities, but with the cessation of hostilities and the beginnings of the Cold War, the Communist bogey reappeared. For many Americans, however, just returned from the experience of real threats in Europe, the whole affair was becoming an irritating bore.

By 1947, another sensation was needed. The Committee was fortunate at this time in having as its two most active and publicly conscious members, John Rankin and J. Parnell Thomas – the former rabidly anti-Semitic, and the latter rabidly anti-New Deal. To pursue these prejudices and give a much needed shot of publicity to the Committee what better area to investigate than Hollywood and its movie colony? Particularly since it was rumoured that one could still come across, even if somewhat opulent and urbane, real live Communists.

Accordingly, in the Spring of 1947, personalities were summoned. First to appear were the 'friendly' co-operative witnesses like Lela Rogers, mother of Ginger, who told the Committee that Ginger had stoutly refused to speak the line 'Share and share alike – that's democracy' in a film; and Adolphe Menjou, who claimed that Hollywood 'is one of the main centres of Communist activity in America'.

Giving the industry six months in which to work up its panic, the Committee then called the 19 'accused' witnesses in October. They never got beyond questioning the first ten, since, led by John Howard Lawson, these noisily refused to answer, were cited for Contempt of Congress and eventually received sentences of a year or six months.

Panic really broke out now in Hollywood, with people like Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall and Richard Conte – who had all originally been members of a 'Committee for the First Amendment' to support the 'accused', now feeling that perhaps they had been duped by the Communists. Fears were further intensified when a little later the Association of Motion Picture Producers rapidly drew rank and published the Waldorf Declaration backing the Committee and publicly dissociating themselves from the Ten.

As in America at large, during the thirties and war years, there had been in Hollywood, card-carrying members of the Communist Party, particularly in the Craft Unions and the Screen Writers' Guild (several of the Ten for example) but also, as in America at large, their influence was not all that strong. Nevertheless, the threat was there and that was good enough for the Committee, especially as the liberal sympathizers now were household names and had in many cases contributed generously, and probably in all innocence, to Communist front organizations in a sort of comradeship of super-charity. Harmless though they were, they were particularly valuable to the Committee in 1951 when, with the war in Korea, there was felt to be a great need to keep anti-Communist feeling as much in the public's mind as possible. Thus the mass hearings of witnesses from Hollywood began.

Troubled already by the falling box-office receipts due to the new craze of television, and speculating wildly on wide screens, 3D, etc., the studio bosses could ill afford this sort of publicity, and they put tremendous pressures on their employees to come clean or else face being barred from further work, i.e. black-listed.

Many did rush forward to come 'clean' – a process which involved not only admitting one's own guilt but also listing the names of all acquaintances who ever evinced the slightest Left-wing sentiments. In this way, fairly rapidly, 324 names were collected and published, and their owners black-listed. Two amongst the many who felt it necessary to go through this process were Elia Kazan who took a whole page of a newspaper to broadcast his change of heart, and Edward Dymytryk who testified against a friend who was at the time making a film in his defence. Those named, or who refused to testify themselves, had either to leave the country, like Carl Foreman, Joseph Losey, etc., or else remain and try to work in pesudonymity like Dalton Trumbo or Polonsky himself.

Even for those who confessed, there were further humiliations to go through before work was possible again: clearance letters had to be sent to the American Legion and other private patriotic groups, and it helped if one was actively seen to be anti-Communist. Thus the actor John Garfield, his career ruined anyway by the hearings, had an article published shortly before his death entitled 'I was a Sucker for a Left Hook'.

The Committee continued investigating manifold areas of Un-American Activity up until 1966, and although it is formally wound up, its attitudes are by no means dead. Indeed, it seems as if, along with the greater realism in the movies, the charade is now over and a more realistic political drama is taking its place: witness the treatment of the Yippies at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago and the 'disappearance' of the Black Panther party leaders.

In its heyday, however, when the Committee's charade was at its height, it is sadly appropriate that those people created through wide exposure to the public should have been so savaged because of that exposure. Probably the least of all real Communist threats they made the most copy. Generally, they, in their turn, jumped the way their public wanted them to. Polonsky's new film was made after an enforced break from work of nearly 20 years, it is also a considerable tribute to one of the few men in Hollywood who was able to maintain both his talent and his integrity during a period when, as *Variety* stated, looking back on the anti-Communist hysteria in Hollywood, 'human nature never looked lousier'.

The Work of an Independent Producer Director

MICHAEL WINNER

I've been asked to write about the practical side of film-making. Not for me an intellectual piece on the freedom of cinematic expression And as I'm ever obliging (well, sometimes) I shall write as directed. First let us define our terms. A 'film', for the purposes of this piece, shall mean an English-speaking film intended for general exhibition, financed in the United Kingdom or the USA. A film requires quite a bit of money to get made: nowadays a low of about half a million dollars and a high of about ten million dollars (the high frequently going over, the low almost never going under). In spite of a few banks and private investors wafting around prepared to chip in, by far the largest proportion of film finance, I'd say at least ninety per cent, comes from film distributors.

There are seven distributors who have, up to now, been called 'the majors' – United Artists, Columbia, Universal, Paramount, Warners, Fox, and MGM. Also financing films are a great many other distribution companies, British and American, many of whom, with some of the 'majors' cutting back severely, are increasingly important producing entities, making ten or more pictures a year. To get a film made, you have to attract the financial support of one of the professional film distributing companies, or of one of the smaller producing groups financed privately or by banks.

A producer or director, or a combination of both, therefore has to approach one of them with an idea, a script, a book, a play, or something for which they would like money to make into a film. This, of course, is the difficult bit! Difficult not only for the would-be producer and/or director, but difficult for the companies who have to finance. After all, these companies are trying to guess what the public will want to see some year or two after the project is first presented to them, and they make their decision to go ahead. That is how long it would normally take to write, mount, produce, finish and distribute a picture.

JOHN PLAYER LECTURE AT THE N.F.T.

Producer – Director

MICHAEL WINNER

will be at the National Film Theatre, South Bank, London at 6.15 p.m. on Sunday, 13th September, 1970.

His feature 'I'll Never Forget What's'Isname' will be screened at 4 p.m. to precede the John Player discussion, with Margaret Hinxman and the N.F.T. audience.

Mr. Winner, who has just completed 'Lawman' starring Burt Lancaster, Robert Ryan and Lee J. Cobb, will discuss his career and the British film industry.

His appearance is part of the N.F.T.'s 'British Cinema in the '70s' which will feature many personalities from the film industry, from Sept. 6th to Sept. 13th inclusive.

All other details from the N.F.T. box office 01–928–3232/3.

Michael Winner directing *The Cranes*

Not surprisingly, with the younger audience seemingly the most cinema-going, efforts are being made to close this time-lag between acceptance of a project, and showing it to the public. Another reason distributors need to get their films out faster is the high rate of interest on money they themselves borrow to make their films – money which has to be returned to the banks whether the films make money or not.

It is at this stage of the selection of projects by the distributors that the cry of 'unfair' is heard from those rejected. 'Why him and not me?' Well, of course, it's a mammoth guessing game. I've never met a company president who didn't admit that. It is said with a smile, but not all that flippantly, that if a company made all the films it rejected, and rejected all the films it made, the balance sheet would probably be much the same! Few, if any, successes have not been turned down more than once by companies before finding a sponsor. The greatest mistake most people make is in presenting projects for finance too early, before the script is really finished and polished. Today you really don't need to get stars to agree to be in the film first. Distributors more and more will go with a script, a theme that they think will be popular, and even an untried director, as long as he has some sort of experience. Here, successful and much-praised work on television is helpful, or a short film of some kind that has been widely lauded.

It always surprises me that one gets so many so-called 'scripts' through the post from would-be film-makers that are no more than

the briefest outline or suggestion of what the film will be. And at that early point the would-be writer or director, usually with no other experience worth mentioning, expects to be cosseted and handsomely paid to carry on! I know when I started the extremely arduous path of getting into films I wrote three scripts completely and totally, and managed to sell them. But I never offered them about until they were in what I, at least, thought was a fit state to be shot. And I had no tuition for that, merely a long period of watching and reviewing films. I sold my first feature film script for two hundred and seventy-five pounds, which wasn't much for an original screenplay – but I was glad to get it – and at least, it left me with one screen-credit behind me.

Aznavour passes Crawford at the *White City*

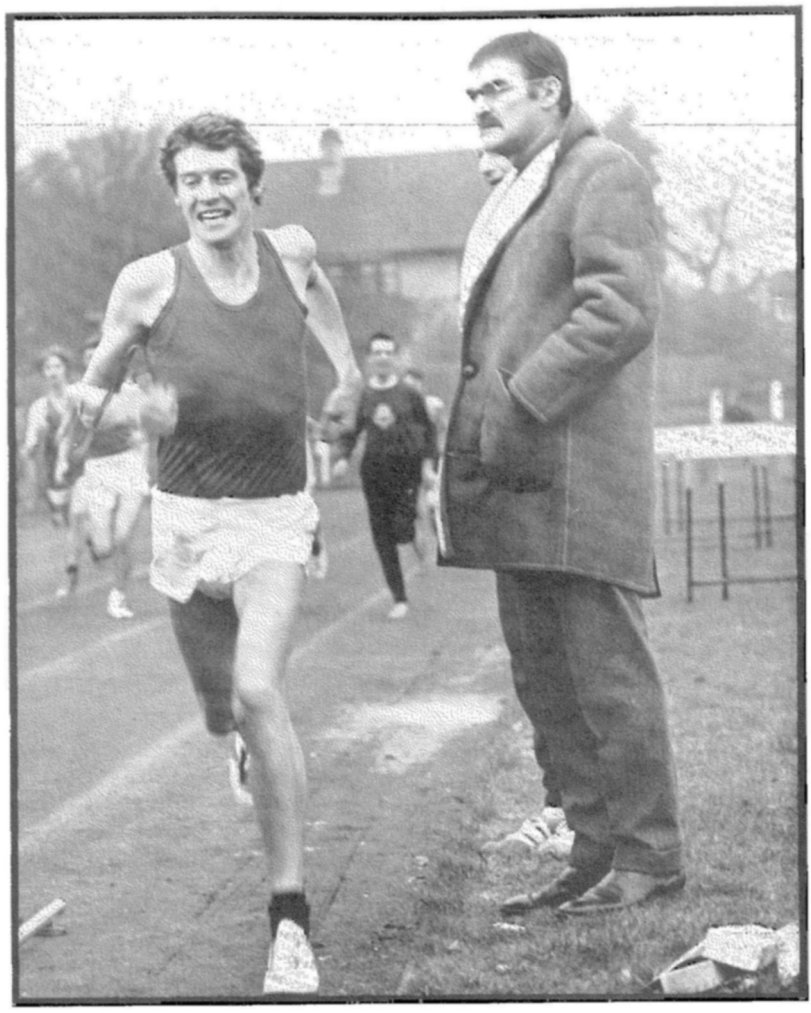
When one hears cries of pain from people in the industry because a certain young man has been given a film to direct, it is not because of some aberration on the part of the distributor, but often because that person went to them with a script he had written that was at least ready to film, and he had taken the trouble to do that without being asked or paid in advance.

So my advice, for what it's worth, to all would-be directors (and that seems to be half the population under twenty-five nowadays) is to write around endlessly for jobs, take whatever work you can get in or near film production; work extremely hard at it; and in your spare time write scripts! In my company we always have at least one young would-be director working in a junior capacity. I am continually amazed at how real work terrifies these coffee-bar critics. They may be great on reading the 'Antonioni handbook', or knocking all the major directors in avid conversations with their young friends, but when it comes to keeping in the office till eight or nine o'clock at night as I do, or arriving on time in the morning, then it's all too much for them.

Stunning as it will doubtless appear to the students of cinema, films are not actually made in the passing of facile opinions. They are made by immensely hard and arduous physical work. I remember reading an article by Bergman where he said his memory of directing was of aching feet, being poorly fed, over-tired, and strained by the hours and the concentration. He was right.

But to return to the progress of our mythical attempt to get a film made. Let us assume a company has taken the chance and agreed to finance your project. If it is the normal sort of deal, today you will have all the money given to you by one of the major distributors who will agree to release your film. You will then receive a fee as producer and/or director, and a percentage of the profits of the film, if any. Obviously, your fee and your percentage will vary greatly according to your experience and your 'track record', as it is charmingly put. Just to give some figures (I wonder why people are always so fascinated with what other people make?) I directed my first feature film for the grand sum of £2,000! Today, directors normally start at around £5,000 for their first film, and the top price I know of, paid to a director, is $1 million, which is over £400,000. Well, it's something to work towards!

At this point, a brief word about the producer. Likely as not, especially if you are a new director, you'll be lumbered with one. In my experience most producers are useless. Usually today they are the most inexperienced men on the film. They are frequently ex-agents who have bought an option on a book or a script, persuaded the distributor to finance it, and insist on staying around to



Stanley Baker, the crippled coach

offer opinions on matters of artistry, from casting to wardrobe to cutting, and, at times, even trying to enforce these opinions. No wonder so many directors today produce for themselves: and no wonder so many distributors today prefer to make deals direct with director–producers. I remember dining with one famous director who said he thought the producer credit should be erased and replaced with 'Negotiated by' and leave it at that. Of course, there are some producers whose records show a fine sense of judgement, who have encouraged and genuinely helped directors and artistes. But there is no doubt, in the field of producing, the film industry suffers its greatest dearth of talent.

Making films is not merely a way of making a living. It is, to me, and

I know to many others, an essential part of life, an expression of one's personality and ideas, in the form of cinema. It may not always be successful in achieving the artistry one attempts. At times, it may succeed for the director, but be rejected by the public and/or the critics. All of that is basically unimportant. A director makes a film, if he has any integrity at all, because he wants to, and in the manner he wants. But it is not always easy to do this. There are pressures all around to prevent the director making the film in exactly his own way. There may be a producer, there may be distributors with ideas that are different, and there may ultimately be the simple fact that there isn't enough money available for the director to do precisely as he wishes.

All of these things the director has to contend with. He has to decide whether he wishes to continue filming a scene, with the necessary running costs, until he is totally satisfied, thus pushing the film way over-budget, or accept something within the time and money allowed. Because everything that goes on the screen costs money. Thus, when a director undertakes an assignment, he not only undertakes to direct the film, but he undertakes, if he is honest, to direct the film in a manner commensurate to what is written in the script – that is, not to change it to become another sort of film – one that the distributor did not expect to see or buy. The director also undertakes to direct the film for more or less the money allocated.

It is therefore extremely important that the director is aware of how much money is available, which he is always told, and that he is satisfied, and *knowledgeable* enough to be satisfied, that that amount of money is adequate for him to make his film in the manner that he wishes. I have, myself, on more than one occasion, suggested that a distributor cancel a film of mine rather than try and make it for less money than permits the picture to be made properly. I think that is an honest thing to do at the preliminary stage. Far more honest than agreeing to make the film, and ending up making either a bad film for the money available, or spending double or more what was originally intended.

To this end, even when I direct a film, as opposed to producing and directing, which I usually do, I always insist on controlling the organization of the film, and having my own staff on it, so that I can be responsible for seeing I get the facilities I need to make the film, and can be sure the monies allocated are wisely and economically spent to produce the best results on the screen.

It so happens that I enjoy the organization of a film. The securing of locations, staff, facilities, et cetera. It is like an artist mixing his paints. I do not believe, for example, that Titian yelled out to some assistant: 'Give me a red' and proceeded to paint on the famous

Titian red. I'm sure he ground the clay or whatever it was, added the oils, mixed the colour until it was exactly what he wanted. Well, a film director paints with many things – facilities, staff, actors, time. Unless he can control these things he is going to find either that there is no control, or that they are controlled by someone else who cannot possibly gear them exactly to his wants.

As well as being an art, film-making is a craft: an enormously complex administrative and business structure with budgets split into thousands and thousands of items, the allocation of which will violently affect what is on the screen.

For example, it is no good at all a director being in the mood to finish off a scene at seven o'clock at night when the light is just right, and the sun is in the right place, so the images are perfect, if he has a crew who don't want to work the overtime and decide to go home. I know one extremely important director who planned a scene at 5 o'clock in the morning to get the required effect, and the crew wouldn't turn up till eight! Well, the director must personally pick people around him, and ensure by any means he has, from bullying to coaxing, that they are there to film as he requires, when he requires. With films more and more on location, and properly so, it is no good choosing 30 locations and leaving them to the location manager to get. The chances are, he'll come back and say he can't get permission to film in 25 of the 30, and that the other five are impractical because he can't get the vehicles there, and it's too far to go for lunch and God knows what else! The average location or production manager doesn't really care. He wants somewhere easy to service the production. I always say that all films should be made in a large field by a car park with six restaurants around, and then the production staff would be happy.

If the director is really determined to preserve the images and places on the screen that he chooses and thinks right, then he must be prepared either to force others to get them, or go in and get them himself. I have frequently been to see local authorities or property-owners to reverse negative decisions given on first request. People say it's not the director's job? Well, who suffers most if the film has to be made somewhere else second best?

In *The Games*, the film I've just made for Fox, there is a classic line of stage direction. It reads: 'A herd of kangaroos appears from the bush and runs left to right at the same speed as the moving vehicle.' Well, how do you do *that*?

Six months before shooting I arranged for six miles of mesh fencing to be flown way into the Australian bush in New South Wales – an official disaster area of the time, where no rain had fallen for a year

and a half. Then we employed 12 kangaroo-hunters, nomadic gentlemen, who, in states where kangaroo-shooting is encouraged, kill kangaroos for five shillings an animal. We bought these kangaroo-hunters 12 motor-bikes, and for six months they herded kangaroos into our stockade. Local farmers were employed to feed and water them.

Came the day when the unit flew up and we had 600 kangaroos. But how to get them out to run at the same speed as a truck with kangaroo-hunters on it? First of all I changed the script because, squeamishly, I couldn't bear to shoot any of them. Then everyone became a kangaroo expert as to how to get them out and running in the right direction. The motor-bike kangaroo-hunters roared around the stockade, the cameras turned, the kangaroos came out – only to run in all directions. It was ghastly. Each attempt was an improvement, but by nightfall we had few kangaroos in the picture – and none left in the stockade. What had cost over £20,000 seemed a disaster.

We came back the next day. A minor miracle. Overnight four hundred of our kangaroos had gone back into the stockade of their own accord. It was the only place they could get food and water! We shot again with cameras hidden in the bush, this time successfully.

The finale of *The Games* is a twenty-six-mile marathon race, run through the streets of Rome in the Olympic Games and ending up in the Olympic Stadium. Streets had to be closed, lined with five thousand spectators, bedecked with flags, lined with troops and police, TV cameras, spectator-stands, escort vehicles and a lot else. Not an easy administrative task. I went to Rome, and my bit was easy. I chose about ten spots, mostly in the centre of the city where the real marathon was run eleven years ago, and said I wanted five miles of main street closed every day for three weeks. The production staff looked amazed. Eventually one spoke: 'In case we can't get these streets closed would you give us alternative streets?' I replied: 'There are no alternative streets, but there are alternative production staff.'

We therefore, and with great credit to all concerned, got every street I wanted. Rome traffic was in utter chaos for three weeks. A great city. Charming people. Even I was surprised. But the average producer wouldn't even have asked for these streets to be shut. And on being turned down, and we were turned down many times before getting our way, the average producer would have shifted to second best.

For the final marathon sequence, with eleven Panavision cameras

turning all the time, we ended up with 36 hours of film for the 15 minutes needed. Of course, if we had staged the race in the normal short 'takes' we'd still be in Rome and the streets would still be closed. The film would've been millions over-budget instead of being half a million dollars under-budget, which it was. Because each shot of the thousand or so in the final cut would have had to be separately staged and lit. As it was, we ran people two or three miles at a time, and shot it like a real sports event, and sorted it out later.

In that case, I think a director needs to know about editing. I worked as an editor for some time, and always edit quite large sections of my films entirely myself. For example, the marathon in *The Games* was left until I returned to London so I could do it from scratch. So I'll take all the blame.

It is this hurly-burly, the mixture of commercial skill as well as artistic skill, the tempestuousness and personalities involved in film-making for which I think Film Schools cannot hope really to prepare students. They can, and I'm sure do, teach the more academic side. Technique, study of technique in other films, camera-work, editing. But when these things have to be done under pressure, day after day, away from any sort of peace, and with the financial and organizational magnitude of feature films, then you're in a different game. And that's what film-making is.

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Michael Winner is giving the John Player Lecture at the National Film Theatre on September 13th.

Je T'Aime, Je T'Aime

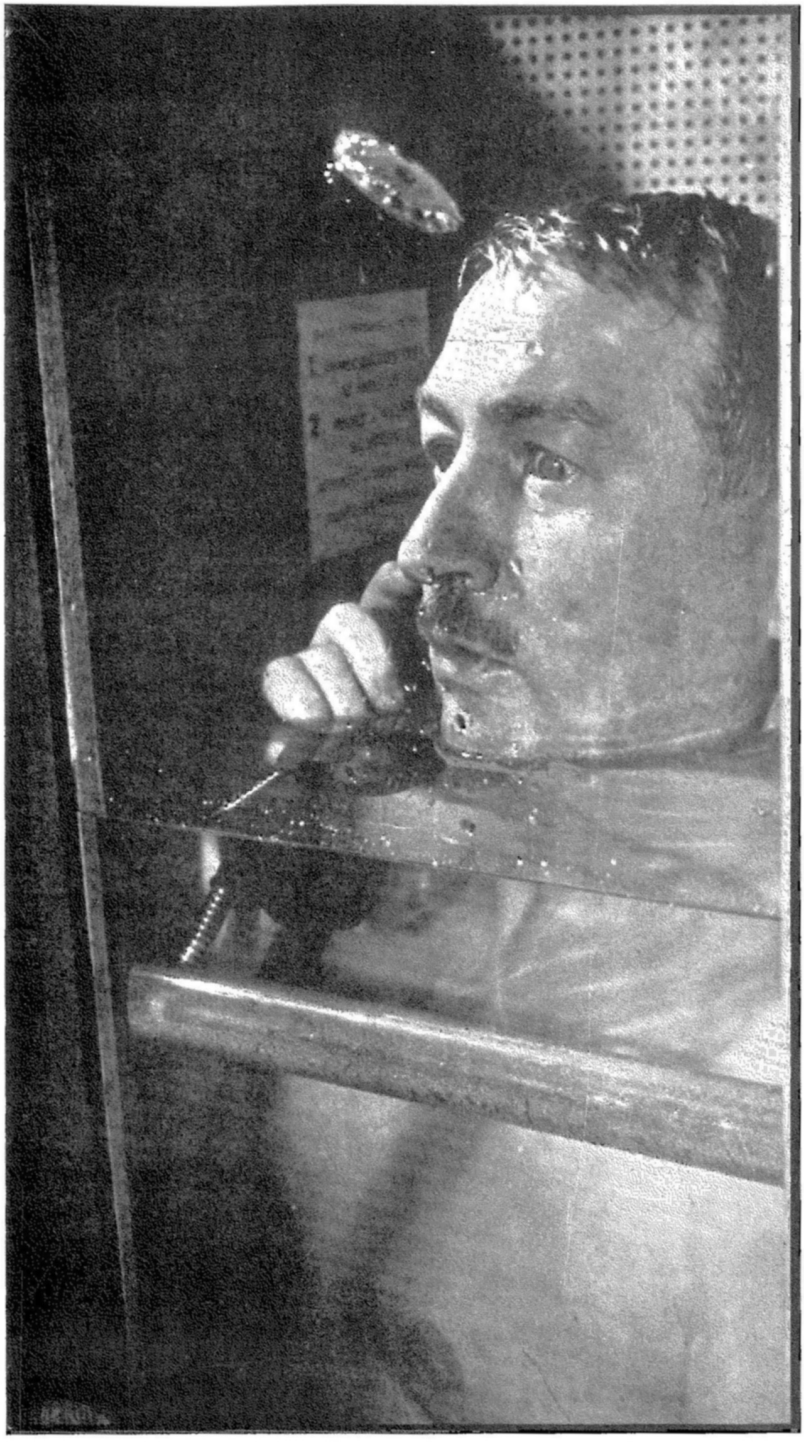
SUZANNE BUDGEN

For his second feature in colour, Alain Resnais has chosen what is, on the face of it, an exercise in science fiction. It is not, however, a Sci-Fi film. The framework is an experiment at Crespel, an establishment for the investigation of time. An attempted suicide, Claude Ridder, is to re-live one minute in his past and, after four minutes of waiting, to re-emerge into the present. The experiment has been successfully carried out with mice, and a mouse is enclosed with Ridder in the time-machine. The machine goes wrong and Ridder goes through fragments of his life outside the given minute, finally re-living the attempt to kill himself.

The device, like the opening of *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, establishes an atmosphere removed from everyday life, but, more than that, it enables Resnais to explore the theme of time past and its relation to time present without recourse to memory. He has more than once disclaimed any special interest in memory, saying that what interests him is time, and that memory is only one of the elements inherent in the subject. However, since *Toute la Mémoire du Monde* (whose title was suggested by someone else), he has had memory assigned to him as a dominant interest, and his disclaimers have been received with a degree of scepticism. But *Je t'Aime Je t'Aime* takes place wholly in the present, since what we are shown is not Ridder recalling, but Ridder re-experiencing certain moments of his life.

It is not rewarding to ask what happens in the film, if one means by this an attempt to reconstitute a series of past events; what happens is what we are shown. Films are like music in that the length and order of shots, like the length and order of notes, are intrinsic to the work, and, just as one's understanding of a piece of music is not greatly enhanced by rearranging the notes, so our understanding of a film is not much enlarged by rearranging the fragments. Resnais's film does not present to us a series of events out of chronological order, but a chronological series of renewed experiences of those events.

The film as a whole is about the unknowableness of human experience in general, and, in particular, the impossibility of entering fully into one's own experience; it is about the fact that time, as we experience it, is always *now*, but that, paradoxically, since *now* is an



infinitesimally short space, time is never now, but always past or future.

Here, in his most fully achieved film (alas not yet distributed in this country), Resnais brings to an austerely refined form many of the features which have occurred in his earlier work, as well as adding a few surprises. Not the least of these is the humour which pervades the film, largely through the disposition of the central character. It in no way detracts from the basic seriousness of the film's intentions, but serves as a distancing device, as well as contributing to the quality of sheer entertainment in the film as a whole. The irony and lucid humour of Ridder in the middle of a situation which becomes gradually more desperate, places one at a distance from that situation though not from Ridder himself, who not only engages our sympathy, but reflects in an acute, concentrated form, thoughts and feelings which at times come to us all.

Resnais has said that for him the real creative excitement of film-making lies in the editing, and in this film much of the import is conveyed in terms of length and juxtaposition of shots. Like *Muriel* it uses shots so brief that their effect is almost subliminal, and like *Marienbad* it makes extended use of repetition and near-repetition. But, whereas in *Marienbad* the device was used to show one will, one desire, working upon another, in *Je t'Aime* the repetitions are evidence of Ridder's struggles to appropriate his own experience. Since time is the explicit subject of the film, the flashing shots which, as in *Muriel*, almost by-pass one's conscious mind, are also an important reminder of the infinitesimal duration of anything that we can call 'now', and of the fact that everything else is as it were a succession of such flashes, which become continuous only through the operation of memory. Time and memory are interdependent since little meaning can be attached to either save in terms of the other. The mouse who is Ridder's travelling-companion, having at least no human memory, seems to have no such problems as beset Ridder himself, and can wander about in Ridder's past as easily as in its own without getting lost in the process.

In many ways this film marks a return to the preoccupations of *Marienbad*, and indeed was first conceived not long after *Marienbad* was released. It has, like *Marienbad*, a circular form, but this time the return to the beginning is more marked and much more precise and inescapable. *Marienbad* merely left an implication that the pair had escaped, if they had escaped at all, into yet another labyrinth, but in *Je t'Aime*, after his renewed suicide, Ridder is, we are told, to be sent to 'Bernigaud', which is the hospital where he had been discovered to us in the first place. And from this last word of him to the beginning of the film there is but the shortest step, since the opening

sequence shows us Moyens, one of the Crespel team, inquiring about Ridder's condition, and being told that he has survived the operation (for the removal of the bullet) but that at the moment nothing more can be said. There is too, in spite of Moyens's saying that it is the first time that they are going to try it with a man, a haunting suggestion that maybe the whole thing has happened before, and, if once, then how many more times? As with *Marienbad*, there is no certainty, and again as in the earlier film, the lack of certainty is part of the substance of the film.

There is a particular quality of explosiveness in works of art which spring from the tension between the natural inclination of the artist and the environmental situation in which he finds himself, and with which he must engage. Resnais presents the case of a classical, ordered, mind in a revolutionary and, in many ways, chaotic situation, and the tense excitement of his work arises partly from the struggle to resolve these two opposing elements. In *Je t'Aime* he has arrived at the most complete fusion which he has yet achieved. Much of this is embodied in the character of Claude Ridder and in the person of Claude Rich who plays him. His serene, composed, countenance embodies an acceptance of uncertainty and apparent chaos as part of the material of life, part of our data, so that the struggle for understanding takes place within the framework of confusion and not in protesting conflict with it. It seems to reflect what may be a climactic reconciliation in Resnais himself, a clearing of the ground for a new, and yet more assured, cycle of work.

In Jacques Sternberg's brilliant script, Ridder is conceived as a character nakedly aware of his environment as extended in space and infinitely extended in time. Part of his despairing failure to come to terms with his life is that he is the victim of his own lucidity. He cannot establish any relationship at all, let alone a valid or meaningful one, between the scale of the grand universal design and the seemingly trivial details of his daily work. This is implicit in a great deal of the film, but is crystallized in a short piece which is worth quoting in full.

Ridder. *Je pense que pendant cent millions d'années la terre a subi règne des algues et des mollusques . . . qu'ensuite elle a été dominée par les grands reptiles et qu'enfin quelqu'un a eu l'idée de créer la firme dans laquelle je suis employé. Je pense qu'à la vitesse de cent mille kilomètres à l'heure, je file de ma naissance vers ma mort . . .* (he puts the point of a pencil into a sharpener in the form of a terrestrial globe), *que la terre tournera sur elle-même pendant d'autres millions d'années sans moi et que pourtant je suis là, accroché à ce crayon, sur ce bolide de feu, à me demander comment convaincre un client* (he writes) *que nous sommes desolés d'apprendre la perte de son colis expedié le 4 et que nous ferons l'impossible pour . . .*

Catrine: 'a passive pivotal character'

Voix (*off*). *Ça va?*
Ridder. *Ça va.*

(**Ridder.** When I think that for a hundred years the earth was under the reign of seaweed and molluscs . . . that after that it was dominated by the great reptiles and that finally someone had the idea of creating the firm in which I work. When I think that at the rate of a hundred thousand kilometres per hour I am speeding from my birth towards my death . . . (. . .) that the earth will turn on its axis for further millions of years without me and that I am nevertheless here, tied to this pencil, on this ball of fire, wondering how I can convince a customer (. . .) that we are distressed to learn of the loss of his parcel sent on the 4th and that we will do all in our power to . . .
Voice (*off*). O.K.?
Ridder. O.K.)

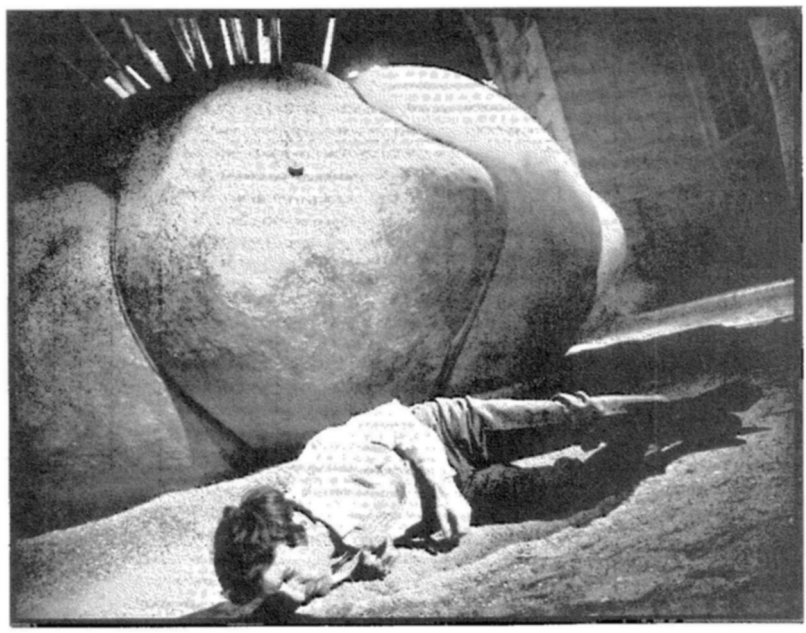
The rapid, yet logical, decline from the breadth of the first conception to the narrowness of the last, together with the uncomplaining flatness of the final exchange, puts before us in dramatic terms both Ridder's inability to find any significance in his own life and his acceptance of that inability as something given and unalterable.

The humour of the script is dramatic and integral to the characters.

It is embodied principally in Ridder, and resides partly in his detached appraisal of every situation as it comes, and partly in a very exact choice of words, reflecting that lucid precision of observation which is one of the basic humorous forms. For instance, when, in response to the Crespel people's suggestion that something extraordinary may be going to happen, he says: 'Are you going to change your machine into a pumpkin?' it is, in the French: '*Vous allez changer votre engin en citrouille?*' the use of the word '*engin*' which gives the remark its salt. In his conversation with the kitten, in which he speaks both parts, his opening kitten-sentence begins, '*Eh bien, pour tout vous dire . . .*' ('Well, to tell you the truth . . .') The disproportion between the tiny creature and the confiding, man to man, frankness of the phrase sets a note of affectionate humour which colours the whole of the ensuing exchange. When it is first proposed to him that he should go to Crespel, 'Some fifty kilometres away. We have a car', he asks what the Met Office has forecast, and, when he is told that the weather is to be fine, he says, 'In that case, why not?' The cool refusal to be impressed is characteristic, and is at once part of his humour and part of his despair. As he walks along the corridors of Crespel on his first day, he hears an odd, slightly whistling, sound, and says: 'Time flying, no doubt', and, on the doctor's surprise at his choice of a firearm for his suicide, he comments that it is indeed not his kind of weapon; that was why he missed.

In his first three features Resnais centred the dramatic movement of

Kidder *(Claude Rich)* beside the time machine



the film on a woman. In *La Guerre est Finie* and *Je t'Aime* the chief character is a man. Diego is the first of Resnais's principals to show any real awareness of himself as a character and of his predicament as something capable of being seen objectively; Ridder takes self-awareness very much further. It is perhaps because Resnais feels that lucidity and self-awareness are dramatically more appropriate to a man than to a woman that this shift of emphasis has occurred; the uncertainty which was so much part of the character and situation of his heroines has now given place to the certainty of doubt, which, beginning with Diego, has now achieved its full embodiment in Ridder.

In some ways the predicament of the heroine in *Marienbad* is closely paralleled by Ridder's in *Je t'Aime*. In the earlier film the château, or hotel, was a mental and emotional habitation as well as an actual place; in *Je t'Aime* Ridder is placed in what is referred to as the 'Sphere', but which is in fact an irregular construction or organic, rather than mechanical, appearance, and which resembles partly a brain, and partly, with its arrangements of tubes, a heart. He is, in other words, enclosed in something which has visible affinities with human life and personality. Inside the Sphere he is placed into a hollow exactly shaped to his body, which embraces his form like a matrix, and in which he lies passive, waiting to be born again into his past. The feat proposed to him seems a simple one; he is to live again one minute of his past, and come straight back to the present, to be released from his cocoon after another four minutes. A five-minute exercise. But the complexity of human experience is so great, and the means of realizing it so small, that Ridder cannot piece together even the one minute that is aimed at. He repeatedly goes through fragments of it, sometimes with a sense of great struggle and difficulty, but at no time does he manage to go through the whole of it in chronological order. It is the same with the other incidents; he experiences them in snatches, but their totality eludes him. Even in so vital a matter as the death of Catrine, he cannot know for certain if he killed her or if her death was an accident. All he knows for certain is that without her he can no longer endure the nonsense which is his life, and with deliberate calm, he shoots himself. But he fails, and, given the implications of the film's ending, there is at least a suggestion that he will always fail, and never escape; that there is no way out.

But, through the personality and presence of Claude Rich, who is able to look sensitive and vulnerable without looking weak, the film keeps an optimistic tone, as although, on a rational plane, life seems to be too much for him, at an intuitive level he gives the impression of being superior to his environment, including even the time device, which has trapped him and put him beyond the aid even

of the scientists who made it. After his second suicide attempt, which may or may not prove final, he is found outside the Sphere and back in the normal present; he has, in other words, beaten the machine, though it may have cost him his life to do so. The scientists have a quiet unemphatic confidence which is impressive and frightening, nowhere more so than at the point where they finally give up all hope of retrieving Ridder. They leave the laboratory without so much as glancing inside the Sphere; they *know* he is not there. They are, however, far from suspecting that he has escaped altogether from the enclosed system which they have devised, and, in his escape, which he achieves when he tries to kill himself, there is an implication that it is only at the risk of one's life that human victory is to be had.

Early in the film the Director of Crespel says to Ridder, 'I have always thought that we ought to have a team of novelists to throw wild ideas down on paper,' and he refers to one of Ridder's novels in which he proposed time-rationing, but in the film it is not Ridder himself, but Catrine who produces the ideas, and they bring to the film an element of inspired nonsense, logical but not rational, which both extends and deflates Ridder's own perplexities. She proposes at one point that perhaps mankind is allergic to green and that, since nature is so full of green, this is why we are in such a bad way. At another time she puts forward the theory that the cat is made in God's image and that man has been created to minister to its needs. She elaborates on this with a quiet logic and Ridder says he is glad to have the problem of our purpose in life settled at last. To Ridder's exclamation of astonishment at seeing the mouse running along the beach, she replies, sensibly, that perhaps it is on holiday. Catrine is a passive, pivotal, character, but her flights of imagination serve as a descant to the serious tenor of the film, while, since her character is deeply imbued with melancholy, the note she strikes, though irrational, is never frivolous.

This is the most mysterious of all Resnais's films, the more so as it has a naturalistic appearance, incisive dialogue, and an air of lucid exposition. The light is the light of day; the scientists have no aura of mystery, and Ridder is a cool young man; the mystery is inherent in our human situation, and inescapable. On a rational level the film offers no solution, but its form, which is also its content, clear, rounded and beautifully coherent, resolves emotionally something of the tension between the world we know and the mystery that surrounds it. It is a film of great authority, ease and precision, and marks, I think, the high point of a cinema in which intellectual clarity and emotional satisfaction are one.

Suzanne Budgen is a BFI Lecturer and part-time Lecturer at the Slade.

SEFT Nineteenth Annual Report 1969—70

Developments in Film Education

Terry Bolas

THE RANGE OF THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES

The Society is now in its twentieth year of existence. Over the past two decades it has played a variety of roles in the development of film teaching and screen education. As a voluntary society of teachers it has acted as an independent pressure group, as a servicing agency, and as a publishing body. During its existence screen education has become an internationally understood term as a result of the world-wide distribution of the Society's journal. Within the United Kingdom, the British Film Institute has become considerably enlarged and now has an Education Department of its own. The many valuable contacts between the Institute and SEFT led to the establishment of a joint post of Secretary SEFT/Teacher Adviser and to the Society establishing a permanent office within the Institute's Education Department. But most important has been the gradual development in schools and colleges of the kind of media teaching that the Society has existed to promote.

The range of the Society's activities is wide. It publishes a bi-monthly journal *Screen* together with occasional publications, the demand for which is considerable. It organizes and staffs a fortnight's Summer School for teachers in Barry, Glamorgan. It establishes Viewing Sessions Centres throughout the country, co-ordinates booking activities, negotiates favourable rates and to an extent subsidizes centres. In conjunction with the BFI Education Department it runs an advisory service and produces regular duplicated documents of information and teaching experience. Apart from its own Annual Conference, the Society is called on to supply lecturers and information for other Conferences and in particular it is associated with organizing the *Young Screen* Festival and Exhibition of

children's films sponsored by the NUT. Its representation on national and international committees involves the attendance of a committee member at numerous functions. Recently too it has become associated with teaching experiments working with groups of teachers.

The purpose of elaborating the range of activities here is to draw attention to the fact that all these activities are organized centrally and that although Committee Members may have responsibility for particular areas, nevertheless the Central Office with its staff of the General Secretary and his Secretary has the task of co-ordinating and supervising the numerous functions of the Society. In addition there are the normal administrative activities. What is clear therefore is that the Society cannot with its present staffing and structure expand its activities in all directions. The work-load of the central office is such that efficiency is rapidly becoming impaired, so that not only are delays inevitable but there is insufficient time to give all aspects of the Society's work the attention that they deserve.

This is not a new problem. The Committee first recognized it when the permanent post of Secretary was created and it was decided that the Membership Department and Sale of Publications should be separated from the main office and handled by Mr. E. Gray who would receive an honorarium for his work. The problem re-emerged in more serious form when *Screen* began to be produced. This was the most expensive venture the Society had ever undertaken and it depended for its solvency on income from advertising revenue and from the promoting of circulation. It became clear that the amount of attention that the business management required could not be given by a voluntary committee member. The Committee therefore decided to engage Educational Publishing Services on a trial basis. Although the use of professional services to take over advertising and circulation requires a financial outlay from the Society, the Committee believes on the evidence so far that this is the only satisfactory way of getting sufficient income from advertising to make *Screen* viable in its present form.

A further problem created by the growth of SEFT'S activities is in the amount of routine administration that has to be handled at Committee Meetings. In last year's report it was announced that a regular pattern for Committee Meetings was to spend part of the evening in business matters and part in discussion with a visiting film teacher or screen educationist. Owing to the pressure of work, the Committee had to abandon this format and now devotes all its time to business. The great disadvantage of this is that the very quality which encourages members to join the Committee – lively

and active commitment to film teaching – is then of relatively little consequence.

Throughout the year the Committee has attempted to refine its structure to make for greater efficiency. The number of roles that any member can play has been reduced to two in order to spread the load of work and two new roles, Editor of Duplicated Materials and Annual Conference Organizer have been created.

The most compelling argument however in favour of a drastic reappraisal and revision of the Society's structure and priorities is the financial situation. The Treasurer's Report which is circulated separately gives the position in detail. To summarize the situation:

The Society has only a comparatively small annual income which has to support many activities. Undoubtedly the most expensive – and the most important – is its journal *Screen* which replaced *Screen Education* and which has been successful in increasing its circulation, in attracting advertising and most importantly in publishing articles of a high quality. At present *Screen* has to economize wherever possible in order to save money for other activities. Unfortunately the economics of success can apply to *Screen* only in a limited way, for if it is to retain its essential commitment to education (which is the reason for its existence) then it can never expect to have a mass appeal – it must remain to a certain extent a subsidized specialist journal.

The Committee feels that the most important element of its work is *Screen* which maintains contact not only with the members of SEFT but with the film teaching movement generally. It is the only journal anywhere to concern itself solely with film and television teaching and to provide support for the academic study of these media. The next priorities of the Society's work are its Summer School and the Viewing Sessions. Its other activities, particularly the advisory service and duplicated materials, can be counted as being of a lower priority because they are paralleled by similar facilities offered by the British Film Institute. But any evaluation of the Society's activity must be set against the wider background of educational needs and the way the Society can most efficiently meet these.

THE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND TO FILM TEACHING

The work of the Society must be set into the context of what is happening in education generally. Originally the Society was formed as SFT – The Society of Film Teachers. This was curious

since at the time film teachers did not exist. Nor do they now. Despite the promotional efforts of the last twenty years, there are no film teachers in schools and only a handful of lecturers in further and higher education whose timetables are fully occupied with film study. There has been an expansion of film teaching – on a vast scale – but the teaching is in the hands of those whose primary subject interest is elsewhere – English, Art, Social Studies for example. Indeed the most extensive experiment to introduce film study into the classroom has been organized by the Humanities Curriculum Project where the stated terms of reference have been to involve the History, Geography and RE Teacher in experimenting with interdisciplinary studies. The film teacher as such does not play a part in this.

The growth in colleges of education of courses where film may be taken as the main subject is not without significance. But it is important to realize the context in which this has taken place. The Robbins report on Higher Education suggested that the emphasis in colleges of education should be shifted to allow students to follow a course of study within which they could develop their own intellectual abilities not merely prepare themselves to teach a particular subject. Consequently the fact that a student may offer film as his main subject does not mean he is being prepared as a film teacher. Indeed there are no vacancies for film teachers. Clearly this puts the student into a dilemma and the staff of colleges of education cannot but be concerned at the way in which students who follow a course on the cinema may find themselves hard put to it to make use of their specialist study in subsequent teaching. Because the universities do not themselves offer degrees in film they do not feel able to accept film as a central part of a B.Ed. course of study. The result is to discourage the prospective film teachers even more.

Of greater significance perhaps are the secondment courses for teachers already in schools. These attract the teacher who has begun film work within another subject context or is anxious to start film work. The important factor here is that these teachers understand the practicalities of the situation. Each has the prospect of developing film and television study and this has been the motivation behind his application. The significance of these courses has been that they have responded to a real educational need and accordingly have acted as gauges on the growth of film teaching. It is therefore most disturbing that the course at Bede College has been forced to cease, not because there were no applications but because the teachers who wanted to come could not get secondment. This is significant because it demonstrates the low value that educational administrators put on film course: a teacher applying for a course in primary mathematics would not have the same difficulty.

It is indeed sad that the official attitude towards film teaching should be so rigid at a time when schools and colleges are equipping themselves at great expense with all the trappings of educational technology. At a time when good projection facilities and simple film-making equipment are becoming commonplace, the film teacher is as much an outsider as ever. Local authorities are appointing visual aids assistants on a par with school librarians; the hardware of these visual media are being introduced to schools; centres are being established to devise and supply software. Yet while all this goes on, the schools and colleges do not change their classical curricula. The new media are seen simply as additional and more efficient means of communicating visually knowledge previously taught by variations on the lecture method.

The number of courses for teachers organized under the heading of educational technology is great. Many of these courses would be of interest to the film teacher – closed circuit television courses, loop film-making etc. What is distressing about these courses is their emphasis on mastering technique and on making more attractive traditional ideas. Implicit in this approach is the attitude that given a few simple rules, anyone can script a television programme or make a single-concept film. Certainly one welcomes the up-dating of teaching method and the attempts to make the utilization of the new media non-exclusive. But the emphasis on acquiring technique is all too reminiscent of the film language approach to both film-making and film study in the early days of *Screen* Education. It breeds a terribly predictable orthodoxy and it precludes any imaginative use of the media. Consequently locally produced TV programmes compete unsuccessfully with the national networks' output and the home-made single concept loop is totally inadequate when compared with the brilliant examples of single concept films – the TV commercials.

This tendency to accept the visual media without properly understanding the way they work was the failing that the original Society of Film Teachers sought to remedy. Then the argument was in general that young people should be able to discriminate between the good and the bad in popular culture and film was deemed to have a special place in these considerations. Screen education was seen as somehow bridging the gap between the classroom and the attractions of popular entertainment. As it turned out this was an argument accepted as valid only in special cases and particularly with Newsome children and Sixth Form General Studies Groups – at what might be termed the weak points in the timetable where teachers were casting round for ideas.

With the advent of educational technology, the problem of under-

standing the media is taken right into the schools and colleges – except that it is not seen as a problem in the way that popular culture was. What evidence there is suggests that children are far more adept at mastering the techniques of the visual media than their teachers, understandably so since teachers are essentially experts with words whose tradition is a literary one and who owe their present position to their expertise in written examinations. Unlike the children and students of today their education was based on reference to a very wide range of books as directed by their teachers. They were not regularly exposed to television from an early age where the channels are so few that there is little opportunity for selection and everyone's terms of reference are the same. We have therefore a situation where the experience of children is not only highly specialized but is common to a whole age group. The consequence is that many teachers are unaware of the nature of the problem they are facing; that what they regard as simply a new way of communicating traditional ideas is instinctively understood by their pupils as being very much more complex. One can only hope that others apart from film teachers will realize that it is new ideas and not first new methods that are involved.

A situation therefore exists where the concerns of the Society should become the concerns of all educationists. However, the number of teachers who recognize their aims as coinciding with those of SEFT is small. An association like NATE has a large membership with supporting local organizations simply because English teachers exist as such. The film teacher does not exist, only a subject specialist with a concern for visual education. Furthermore in order to get promotion a teacher is inevitably forced to concentrate on his subject specialism, not on film. By the time a sometime screen educationist achieves a headship and is in a position to introduce film teaching into his school, his connections with the subject are remote, if not forgotten.

There is therefore an urgent need for the Society to consider its priorities and devise a strategy that propagates its ideas most effectively. The Committee has devoted a great deal of thought to this area and it seems likely that the resources of the Society which are very limited can no longer be used to support so many activities. The traditional SEFT policy of pressing for action along all possible fronts cannot be maintained as the growth of film and television teaching is now so widespread. It has already been indicated where the Committee feels its most important and influential commitments are. It seems likely that the Society will shortly present its members with proposals for making its work less diffuse and more effective.

SECTION REPORTS

ADMINISTRATION

The full-time General Secretary for the past year has been Mr. Terry Bolas. He has been assisted by Miss Susan Reed who replaced Miss Leslie Denkenberger when the latter returned to the United States.

The Committee is most grateful to Miss Denkenberger for the way in which she coped with the difficulties of administration in the absence of a permanent Secretary.

The load of work on the Central Office has become extremely heavy. The Committee is most grateful to Mr. Paddy Wahnnel Head of the British Film Institute's Education Department for the very considerable practical assistance he has given to the Secretary's office in order to alleviate the work load as far as possible. The Committee also acknowledges the continued interest and support shown by Mr. Stanley Reed, Director of the British Film Institute.

Committee: The Committee met ten times during the year. Roy Armes and Ed Buscombe were co-opted on to the Committee and Allen Jacobs resigned.

The Committee:		*Full Committee Meetings Attended*
Chairman –	R. C. Vannoey (S)	9
Secretary –	T. J. Bolas	10
Treasurer –	C. M. Bott (S)	8
	R. Armes (TT)	6/7
	J. Bennett (P)	7
	E. Buscombe (FE)	4/4
	J. Cook (S)	9
	J. Gilleghan (S)	–
	K. Gough-Yates (TT)	9
	A. Jacobs (FE)	5
	V. Jacobs (S)	7
	D. Lusted (S)	9
	R. Mainds (S)	–
	E. Symonds (FE)	2
	R. Watkins (TT)	4
	B. Wies (S)	0
	R. Wills (TT)	1

P = Primary
S = Secondary
FE = Further Education
TT = Teacher Training

Messrs Armes and Buscombe were co-opted during the year.

Messrs Gilleghan and Mainds are provincial members and not normally able to attend Committee Meetings.

During the year there was further reorganization of the Committee so that responsibility was shared out among more members. In particular the roles of Annual Conference Organizer and Editor of Duplicated Materials were created.

The division of responsibility among Committee Members is as follows:

General Secretary – Terry Bolas
Treasurer – Chris Bott

Publications
Editors – Kevin Gough-Yates, Terry Bolas
Business Manager – Allen Jacobs (until Sept.) then Chris Bott
Editor of Duplicated Materials – Roy Armes

Summer School
Organizing Tutor – Kevin Gough-Yates

Viewing Sessions
Organizer – Jim Cook
London Group – Vivien Jacobs
Leeds – John Gilleghan, Roger Mainds

Annual Conference
Organizer – David Lusted

Publicity
Organizer – Edward Buscombe

Non-Committee Appointments
General Administration & Editorial Assistant – Susan Reed
Membership & Sale of Publications – E. Gray
Circulation & Advertising *Screen* – David Cavalier
Duplicated Materials Assistant – Tom Ryall
Assistant Editor *Screen* – Margaret Tarratt

MEMBERSHIP

In order to cater for the interest in the Society's journal *Screen* from Libraries and educational institutions the Committee has introduced a new category of *subscribers* who receive only the journal.

After having kept the membership rates static for more than four years, the Committee has regretfully had to increase the rates to 45*s* in order that what members pay should bear a realistic relationship to the cost of producing *Screen*.

During the past year the membership has shown a net gain of nearly

two hundred. Many of the new 'members' are libraries who take *Screen*. It is for these organizations that the new category of subscribers is most applicable.

PUBLICATIONS

The whole of the Society's publications budget this year has been devoted to *Screen* in order to launch effectively this new journal.

Nevertheless its existing publications continue to sell well and copies of the following are still available:

Young Film Makers
Young Film Makers Symposium
Film Society Handbook
100 Films for Juniors

Back copies of the Yearbooks may be purchased in sets at reduced rates and a number of recent subscribers have taken the opportunity of obtaining back numbers while they are still available.

Published during 1969–70
Screen No. 3 (May–June 1969, 112pp)
Screen No. 4/5 (July–Oct 1969, 192pp)
Screen No. 6 (Nov–Dec 1969, 112pp)
Screen No. 7 (Jan–Feb 1970, 104pp)
Screen No. 8 (Mar–April 1970, 112pp)

SCREEN

Screen has been the most successful venture the Society has undertaken in the last year and although it is costly to produce it has remained within the budget approved by Committee and has expanded the readership of *Screen Education*, attracting not only teachers of film but students and educationists whose interests overlap with those of film teachers.

The problem of producing a serious journal within an educational context, on an almost entirely voluntary basis, is obvious. Teachers, on the whole, work long hours and have extra curricular responsibilities which make it difficult for them to turn their hands to writing more than the very occasional seriously considered article. Many areas related to film teaching have been adequately covered and some of the best are available in the form of duplicated material from the British Film Institute's Education Department. Merely to repeat a new teacher's experience or to reinforce a standard process by printing more articles covering the same ground seemed retrogressive. Instead, the journal has attempted to stimulate those in education (not teachers alone) by covering areas which are topical, like the articles on the making of Lindsay Anderson's *If . . .*, and on

Budd Boetticher; it has attempted to allow some controversy to emerge through articles by Alan Lovell, Robin Wood and Roy Armes; it has chosen a special area on which to concentrate – British Cinema – which has been almost systematically ignored by film magazines; and has retained a concern for research emphasized especially in the articles on Friese Greene, *La Régle du Jen*, and *An Actor's Revenge*. The general concern of how media relate to society has also been ignored elsewhere and articles have been invited from many sociologists, psychologists and other interested persons. There is no doubt that the journal is now considered seriously by those in education. It is only fair to point out that some people haveiconsidered the journal's policy misguided: some have argued for a serious critical journal, others for a polemical magazine which provides the vanguard for screen education. Some people have suggested a broader based magazine which takes in other areas, which do not have a direct bearing on film teaching. At the other end of the scale, some have wanted to relate the journal much more directly to teaching methods and classroom experiences. These views have all been expressed at various times in some form and with varying degrees of conviction. If the journal is to cover some of its printing costs by shop sales, some articles must clearly be of a general nature; the layout had also been affected by the hope of boosting sales distributor is currently examining the prospects for its wider distribution and negotiations are taking place with an American distributor.

On the whole, the journal has retained its educational tone, it carries a great deal of factual material and should become a valuable reference work. The standard of articles is consistently high, although suitable material is not easy to get and can only be obtained with considerable effort. The early issues of *Screen* were heavily subedited in order to establish a style for the Journal. Articles now reach the editors in a much more acceptable form and fewer suggestions are needed by the Editors.

Kevin Gough-Yates
Terry Bolas
Editors

DUPLICATED MATERIALS

In the course of the year a start has been made on the task of bringing up to date and making available in duplicated form the kind of information that previously filled a valuable section of the Screen Education Yearbook but which does not now find a place in *Screen*.

The responses of SEFT Members to the questionnaire circulated

during the Summer in this connection were most heartening, though the very diversity of interests revealed makes it impossible to fill every member's specific needs. The replies also indicated that quite a number of members were unfamiliar with the pamphlets and hand-outs already produced by the BFI Education Department. Our connection with this department is a close and most useful one and in future we will make sure that our members are kept regularly informed of additions to their lists. It is hoped to supplement *Screen* with duplicated material and members will already have received lists of additions to 16 mm catalogues and a checklist of 16 mm distributors. It is planned to distribute with forthcoming copies of *Screen* a source list of information about film-making and two accounts of practical film teaching experiences. The latter are clearly much in demand but remain very difficult to obtain, and the editor would be most interested to hear from any SEFT Members who would be willing to write up accounts of their film teaching experience for the benefit of new-comers to the field.

Roy Armes,
Editor of Duplicated Materials

SUMMER SCHOOL – BARRY – 11–22 AUGUST 1969

The Course consisted of both lectures and screening of films on National Cinemas and some discussions on teaching method which have been published (*Screen* Vol. Eleven, No. 1). Where the practical work was concerned, simple 8 mm exercises with the use of sound, 35 mm still photoplay, and some work with a Polaroid camera were the main areas in which people worked. In general, it was a successful fortnight.

Observations

1. Perhaps the most rewarding element was to find that there had been a change in the type of person coming to the Summer School. Almost everyone attending was a teacher or had a strong interest in education. This offers some interesting possibilities for future Summer Schools and it emerged in discussions that students would like more examination of teaching problems. This spontaneous request points clearly to the needs of many teachers and relate to practical work as well as 'film study'.
2. The lectures on the National Cinemas tended to be rather too general and it was felt that more time should be given to close analysis. This was partly because the school tried to cover too much and it is generally thought that future Summer Schools should concentrate on one area only.
3. Glamorgan is extremely pleased with the SEFT Summer School from which they derive many benefits – chiefly in terms of the

facilities and organization that are available to us. On the other hand SEFT gains enormously by holding the Summer School at Barry. Much of the administration is carried out by Glamorgan's Summer School administrative staff – this includes enrolment, collection of the fees, finding accommodation and purchasing all supplementary film material for the School.

4. Basically it seems that the Society's judgement was correct in concentrating on simple Super 8 mm equipment and simple still equipment as most teachers seem to have access to nothing else. Secondary education is expanding in the area of 8 mm work and an obvious need in future years is to provide teachers with the opportunity to carry out experimental work that can be carried through to the school situation.

Staff: Kevin Gough-Yates (Course Organizer)
Terry Bolas
Jim Cook
Clive Tickner
Susan Reed (Administration)
David Trainer (Technical Assistant)

Kevin Gough-Yates
Summer School Organizer

VIEWING SESSIONS

Since the last Annual General Meeting the Committee has given much thought to the organization and running of Viewing Sessions and last June it reached two important decisions regarding these.

The first was that on receiving a request from members for Viewing Sessions, either Jim Cook (Viewing Sessions Organizer) or another member of the Committee would organize the first session but thereafter the members concerned should take the initiative in planning their group's sessions themselves. The Committee then withdraws into an advisory capacity, offering the Viewing Sessions Group the film booking facilities of the SEFT General Office, including reduced rates for the hire of most feature films and the free hire of extracts.

As the groups are not conceived of as free film-shows, it is stressed to groups that they should try as far as possible to be self-supporting. In practice so far this seems to have proved difficult for some of the groups and so the Committee, after considering the nature of a group's suggested programmes, will grant it a budget of up to £25 per annum normally to be spread over six Viewing Sessions if it considers the outlined programme to be educationally valuable.

During the past year the two well-established groups in London and

Leeds have continued to run Sessions, the former now convened by Vivien Jacobs and the latter by John Gilleghan. In addition we have been able to inaugurate three new groups, one in Ormskirk run by Alan Whittaker, one in Birmingham run by Alan Brookfield, and one in Gosport organized by Alan Nelson. Although interest was shown in the Hornchurch area a projected group there failed to materialize. Hertfordshire teachers are anxious to start Viewing Sessions.

The second decision that the Committee reached about Viewing Sessions is theoretical rather than pragmatic. Since we are now encouraging Viewing Sessions by helping to organize and finance them, it was felt that we and the Membership in general need to ask ourselves what exactly is a Viewing Session, what aims ought it to have, and what are the best means of achieving those aims. We have therefore organized the Weekend Study Conference on Viewing Sessions at Moor Park College, Farnham, between 18–20 September 1970. Here Members of the Committee and, more importantly, Viewing Sessions' Group Convenors will give their answers and views on the sort of questions posed above.

As the only means whereby members can examine and familiarize themselves with the film material they may want to teach, Viewing Sessions are obviously very important and they will continue to be so until we all have our personal cassette library of movies. It would be impractical and probably invidious for the SEFT Committee to roadshow the archetypal Viewing Session up and down the country and ultimately therefore the growth and success of Viewing Sessions must rest with the initiative and enthusiasm of the Membership at large. For apart from occasional Study Weekends we cannot create a need but only answer one.

Jim Cook
Viewing Sessions Organizer.

THE 1969 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The subject of the Conference centred around the value of two personal approaches to the use of film in education.

Jim Hillier, then Research Officer of the Humanities Curriculum Project, described how material such as Humphrey Jennings's *Listen to Britain* and the extract from Wajda's *A Generation* (previously viewed by the audience) would be used as illustrative evidence of a theme such as, 'The impact of war on society'.

Colin McArthur, Editor of Film Materials in the BFI's Education Department, argued the importance of considering the films as artifacts, in their own right.

The essential differences of teaching approach could be expressed in

the formulation of individual questions, with reference to *A Generation*. Whereas HCP's might be: 'What is Stash feeling at this point?' or 'How are we made aware of the effect of war on people's lives?' Colin McArthur's might be: 'What is the mood of the scene outside the church? How does it differ from that outside Dorota's flat? . . . at the ammunition factory?'

After the lectures, a general discussion took place in the afternoon in which contributions were wide-ranging.

The Conference was enlightening in essentially three ways:

1. It was apparent that an increasing number of educationists of varied backgrounds and interests, are using film in some way in their teaching.
2. The articulation of the two widely differing approaches impressed the need for study in the area of 'film in education' theory and a serious movement towards a cinema aesthetic.
3. It indicated the important role that such discussion has to play in the development of the film teaching movement. This has, in part, been met by the appearance of the new journal, *Screen*.

David Lusted
Annual Conference Organizer

THE YOUNG SCREEN

For the first time the Festival of children's films sponsored by the NUT and organized by SEFT and the BFI was a three-day event, held at the NUT's headquarters at Hamilton House. Unlike its predecessor, The Young Film Makers, this was not a competitive event. The emphasis was on screening a wide variety of school-made films in a series of separate showings over the three-day period. A considerable range of material was screened and programme notes explained the educational background from which each film stemmed. An exhibition of related work and equipment was on permanent display.

The event was opened by Miss Jennie Lee, Minister for the Arts, who took the opportunity to announce the setting up of the National Film School. The Young Screen received considerable publicity in the press and on television and attendance was encouraging. More people came over the three-day period than had previously packed into the NFT for the one afternoon's showing. It was particularly gratifying that so many school parties came, many from a considerable distance. It is hoped that in future it will be possible to provide better projection facilities as a very large range of equipment was needed to show the entries.

Terry Bolas
Young Screen Organizer

PUBLICITY

It has been felt that several of the Society's activities might benefit from more publicity aimed both at members and at those outside the Society. To this end, information about such events as the Annual Conference in May, the Summer School, and the Study Weekend arranged for September has been forwarded to a variety of journals and other publications likely to be read by those who would be interested. In particular the *Times Educational Supplement* featured a full-page item on the Society.

The Society is considering taking space for a stand at the NAVEX Exhibition in July. New, more attractive, literature has been printed in order to encourage subscription to *Screen*. Within the membership, it is largely a question of improving the existing channels of communication (principally circularization) to ensure that at least members will not have the excuse of ignorance for not taking part in what is going on. But thought is being given to the question of whether circularization of certain activities such as Viewing Sessions, etc., could be decentralized and sent only to people in local areas.

Edward Buscombe
Publicity Organizer

INTERNATIONAL X MUSE

The Society was represented at the final screenings in the X Muse Competition for Children's Films in the Hague on 25 October. The Secretary attended as an observer, as the Society together with the Education Department of the British Film Institute has always doubted the educational value of such competitive events.

AMSTERDAM CONFERENCE

A Conference organized by the Dutch national centre in Amsterdam immediately before the X Muse Festival was well attended by national representatives and Dutch teachers. Its aim was to consider approaches to practical film work in schools and a number of sub-committees were formed for this purpose. It became clear that the situation in Britain was far in advance of that elsewhere, largely as a result of the central agencies of the BFI and SEFT and the services they provide. The Secretary chaired one of these discussion groups.

CENTRE FOR UNDERSTANDING MEDIA

As a result of interest expressed by Dr. John Culkin of the Centre for Understanding Media in New York, a number of children's films entered for the Young Screen Festival were sent to the Centre. They are being considered for possible inclusion in a TV programme on film making.

REPRESENTATION

The Society is represented on the following:
The Aural and Visual Aids Panel (Schools) ILEA;
British Board of Film Censors Advisory Sub-Committee of the Cinema Consultative Committee;
National Centre of Films for Children and Young People;
National Council of Women Mass Media Committee;
Television Panel of the Mass-Communications Advisory Committee of the UNESCO National Commission for the United Kingdom.

KODAK LIMITED

The Kodak Education Service offers two-week courses in film-making for teachers. The Society is pleased to associate itself with their courses and the Secretary regularly visits the Kodak Education Service during the courses to draw attention to the work of the Society.

NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS

The Society continues to co-operate with the NUT and BFI in organizing an annual event concerned with practical film work.

81 Dean Street,
London W1V 6AA

Terry Bolas
General Secretary

Presented on behalf of the Committee of the Society for Education in Film and Television to the Annual General Meeting, 9 May 1970.

VIOLENCE IS GOING TO OCCUR

Why does Conor Cruise O'Brien say so? Why does Edinburgh University Catholic Chaplain Anthony Ross predict storms in our time? Why has Sorley Maclean broken a long silence to publish a poem on Jan Palach? How does Stan Smith, New Left Manifesto contributor, explain the return of the gods to politics? Will tomorrow's universities become tools of tomorrow's capitalism? Are Fontana's Modern Masters possessive, pretentious, parsimonious and puerile? Why does Tom McGrath think the restoration of joy is *the* political issue? What happened when an Aberdeen search party joined the hunt for "Scottish culture"? What does Colin McArthur think of Jim Kitses' *Horizons West*?
Find the answers in

SCOTTISH INTERNATIONAL *summer issue*

Single copies 5s, subscriptions 19s (incl. post)

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE CELLULOID MUSE: Holliwood Directors Speak
ed. Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg, *Angus and Robertson*, 1969, 50*s*.

This book is composed of interviews with fifteen Hollywood directors: Aldrich, Bernhardt, Cukor, Frankenheimer, Hitchcock, Lang, Mamoulian, Milestone, Minnelli, Negulesco, Rapper, Robson, Jacques Tourneur, Vidor and Wilder. They are the fruits of research by the editors, Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg, for their book *Hollywood in the Forties*. In their introduction, they claim that:

> 'the interviews told us more than just the historical circumstances of the genesis of movies like *All Quiet on The Western Front*, more than the steps by which the directors had made their respective transitions from editing, art direction, the stage or television to motion picture direction; they enriched our understanding of the film-making process and helped to define more clearly than ever before the precise nature of the director's contribution.' (p. 12)

Although some of the material (the Hitchcock interview for instance) may seem to cover familiar ground, the editors' claim is not unfounded. The book has the salutory function for an era of '*auteur*'-minded critics in reminding us of the key roles of producer, actor, scriptwriter, cameraman and editor in contributing to the finished product, and a clear picture is given of the pressures on the director employed by the big studios.

Minnelli, for example, talks with some bitterness of the way in which *Two Weeks in Another Town* was 'very badly cut by the studio head without a moment's warning', whilst he and the producer, John Houseman, were out of Hollywood. Lewis Milestone records the problems of working with Sam Goldwyn: 'too adamant, too dictatorial, and you had to go his way, because he'd never change his mind about anything.' Fritz Lang describes his abortive attempt to give Marlene Dietrich 'a new screen image' in *Rancho Notorious*, as 'an elderly dance-hall girl'. Stubbornly, she reappeared looking 'younger in each scene'.

Certain key figures recur in many accounts, David O. Selznick, for example, or Bette Davis, as well as Joan Crawford or Marilyn Monroe. Inevitably, the book is rich in anecdotes of Hollywood mythology. Aldrich gives a fascinating account of working with Davis and Crawford on *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*. Whilst insisting that their behaviour on set was professional and correct, he admits that the two actresses 'detested' each other. Readers of Bette Davis's autobiography will know that she took immense pride in supervising her own make-up. In *Baby Jane* she appears to have suffered from what Aldrich reckoned to be her 80 per cent control. He relates her reaction on seeing the film for the first time, a reaction worthy of Jane herself:

> 'About five minutes into the picture I heard this quiet but kind of desperate sobbing beside me and turned to her wondering what the hell was the matter. "I just look awful," she wept. "Do I really look that awful?" ' (p. 36)

Billy Wilder's account of *Sunset Boulevard* is both instructive and funny. The film was originally intended as a burlesque, with Mae West, but 'later it evolved into a tragic story'. It is interesting to read Wilder's description of his original opening for the film – a scene in a morgue with the corpses swapping histories. This was jettisoned after a screening in which the audience was convulsed with laughter. It was Stroheim's idea to have the butler writing Norma Desmond's fan mail:

> 'But then he could go too far. "Let me do a scene," he said, "where I'm washing and pressing my former wife Norma Desmond's panties. Please, I know I can do it." And I said, "Yes, I know you can, but I don't want to shoot it.' "

Many of the interviews contain small pockets of special interest. It is good to have conjectures confirmed by Mamoulian as to how the transformation from Jekyll to Hyde was achieved in a single continuous shot. Mark Robson's account of working with Orson Welles gives an impression of a curious manic carelessness on the part of the latter, who did not participate in the cutting of *The Magnificent Ambersons* although he had the right of final cut. Frankenheimer (bizarrely included among the elders) tells of the encouragement they received from President Kennedy to make *Seven Days in May* in the teeth of opposition from the Pentagon. The worried studio bosses felt obliged to proceed.

As general reading, the book suffers from the usual longeurs of printed interviews but it is clearly useful to find them gathered together in a single volume. The reader may well disagree with the editors' rating of the directors not to mention the criteria they use.

Directors are divided into artists, interpreters and craftsmen in the Introduction. Unlike Lang, Wilder, Vidor and Milestone, Hitchcock does not manage to make the first grade: 'because his films do not reveal a valid and strongly held *Weltanschauung*, but are simply vehicles for personal self-indulgence, expertly engineered.' One wonders what chance Sternberg or Stroheim would have on this basis! However, the editors' views do not affect the chronology of the book which is strictly alphabetical. The book is probably of most value to the researcher who wants to read the individual section relevant to his own interests. Since many of the interviews are fairly substantial, it has considerable more value than Harry M. Geduld's *Film-Makers on Film Making*, recently reprinted by Penguin.
MARGARET TARRATT

THE FILMS OF ROBERT BRESSON
ed. Ian Cameron, *Studio Vista*, 10*s* 6*d*

A book on Bresson is always welcome. More than perhaps any other film-maker, Bresson defies our attempts to analyse his methods and the reasons for our own response. It is easy enough to speak of him in general terms; to say that, of course, the real narrative in his films is spiritual, though expressed in material forms; that he strips his characters naked showing us not their bodies but their souls, and so on. The real difficulty arises when we try to see how these results are achieved, and why films which are apparently so bare should be so passionately absorbing.

In this book, Charles Barr, Raymond Durgnat, Daniel Millar and Leo Murray contribute two essays each; an introductory essay by Amedée Ayfré and an article by André Bazin, with a filmography by Elizabeth Cameron, complete the collection. It should, one feels, have been a valuable one, but with so elusive a subject, the lack of a unified approach makes for confusion instead of richness. References are frequently made from one film to another, but, as the other is often one that is dealt with by another critic, the point may not be followed through and the precise application is lost, or at best unclear.

The Ayfré essay takes a wide general view and has the air of telling us a good deal, but does, in fact, stop short of examining how the films really work, merely asserting that they do. 'By expressing nothing, the masks express precisely that which is beyond expression.' Why? How? 'The whole point is that behind these inexpressive faces lies death.' This, by itself, is no explanation. Bazin here is illuminating. 'What we are asked to look for on their faces,' he says, 'is not some fleeting reflection of the words but an uninterrupted

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condition of soul, the outward revelation of an interior destiny.' Although this, too, fails to explain how the phenomenon works, it offers a conception which we can grasp at an intuitive level, and which deepens our response to the films. This is, in fact, the level at which much of Bazin's contribution is to be grasped, if at all, since on a rational plane, not all of it is readily intelligible. This is more than usually tantalizing, as Bazin gives the impression of having come nearer than most to understanding what Bresson is really doing. The effort to understand what he says is therefore rewarding, as it leads one to thoughts and questions which, if not precise, are at least in the right territory.

In a collection of this kind the various writers seem to lose the sharp edge of their differences and the failings of each tend to colour the whole. For instance, Raymond Durgnat's flippancy of manner, which seems here to be singularly inappropriate, makes it difficult to be aware of other people's insights as well as his own. For insights he has. In his essay on *Les Anges du Péché* he says, '. . . the grey light reduces the faces to a grey paste, to, as it were, the ectoplasm of the Holy Spirit, to accidental forms of an undifferentiated divinity.' This makes a real contribution to one's understanding of Bresson's work as a whole, but this and other illuminating phrases would be all the better for being set in a context less at variance with the nature of the subject.

The two essays which most seriously attempt to find out how the films really work are those by Leo Murray, on *Le Procès de Jeanne d'Arc* and *Un Condamné à Mort s'est Echappé*. He relates what he has to say to precise shots and sequences in the films, so that one can follow his train of thought, weigh up his evidence, and come to certain conclusions of one's own. With a film-maker like Bresson, notoriously difficult to pin down, this seems to be especially valuable. In sum, this is an uneven book, and one which, on a first reading through, is not very rewarding, since there is nothing to guide one to the changing levels of response which are needed. When read, however, writer by writer, it seems more substantial.

SUZANNE BUDGEN

KISS KISS BANG BANG

Pauline Kael, *Calder and Boyars*, 50*s*.

STYLES OF RADICAL WILL

Susan Sontag, *Secker and Warburg*, 50*s*.

It would be inaccurate to say that these two books represent the best and worst of American criticism. Miss Kael quotes the *New York Times's* dismissal of *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (not released in the States

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until 1967) as a 'second-rate antique' and immediately, one is aware of the murky depths below. Nevertheless, Miss Kael's is a very unsatisfactory book. It consists of a series of reviews of recent films, longer pieces on figures such as Brando, Welles and Stanley Kramer, a vitriolic account of Sidney Lumet making *The Group*, and ends with what are called 'Notes on 280 Movies'. Of these she remarks: 'I hope that no one will confuse my purpose by attempting to see significance in what I've left out.' It isn't easy to see the significance of what has been left in. What is the purpose of the miniscule jottings on *The Gold Rush* or Tati's *Jour de Fete*? And do we really need a plot summary of *Oedipus Rex*?

The form of the book seems very old-fashioned. Surely there is enough film journalism around. Don't we need, rather, more studies of directors, movements, national cinemas; more serious *work*, and not more occasional pieces, however wittily written? Whether Miss Kael is the person to produce this is an open question. She can certainly convey an infectious enthusiasm when discussing Renoir or Dreyer, even if she doesn't often go in for anything more penetrating than calling *Day of Wrath*: 'the expression of a single personality, built up from Dreyer's script, choice of camera angles, editing, and his control of every nuance of performance.'

It's true that, as Miss Kael would no doubt argue, much of what is called close analysis is frankly boring. But her own position on American cinema betrays a disappointing lack of discrimination, as well as being as out-dated as the form of her book. American films are vitiated by their commercialism and inherent vulgarity; the economics of the mass-market: 'have broken the heart of every artist who has tried to work in the movies.' Almost all that can be qualified as art has come from Europe. She is not, presumably, unaware of the arguments that have been advanced, at first in France, then later in Britain and in America itself, for the artistry of Hollywood. She does, after all, mention Hitchcock, Hawks and Ford. But, invariably, the attitude is that in so far as their films are enjoyable, they are so on the level of kitsch, fun but trashy. Though *Red River* is a 'magnificent horse opera', 'a lot of it is just terrible'. (What, we aren't told.) Hitchock's techniques 'probably have more to do with gamesmanship than with art'. *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* was made in the studio and therefore Ford is 'tired'. Such a position can be defended, no doubt, but only if the arguments advanced on the other side are taken into account and if a more careful judgement is exercised than Miss Kael displays in such statements as that the differences betwen *The Way West*, *The War Wagon* and *El Dorado*: 'aren't, finally, very significant.'

A dissatisfaction with things American is all that Susan Sontag

shares with Pauline Kael (apart from her sex) – a not insignificant link, however, for if the English 'quality' Sunday newspapers are any guide, film is still the only art not judged to require the full resources of the masculine mind. Miss Sontag ignores American films completely, and the logic of her position demands this.

This is not the place to discuss that part of the book (roughly two-thirds) which is not devoted to the cinema, but the remainder (three essays on film and theatre, Bergman's *Persona*, and Godard) is closely related to it. She values art primarily in so far as it has the capacity to express new ways of thinking: '. . . the serious art of our time has moved increasingly towards the most excruciating inflections of consciousness.' If this is so, then the American cinema hardly rates as serious. At least, until very recently, the great majority of American films have been based on a traditional, not experimental, view of the world, and this has been reflected in their technique, in their adherence, for example, to a conventional narrative structure. If there are signs that this is changing, they are still a long way behind the European *avant-garde*. (The underground, of course, is something very different.)

For Miss Sontag, there appears to be no problem. But for those who wish to reconcile a progressive, even revolutionary, aesthetic, with a love of Hollywood, there are two ways out. One is to argue that in important ways the films do not merely support and reflect the *status quo*; that there is, for example, a strongly subversive element in much film comedy (notably Hawks and Cukor), or that the effect of Hitchcock is ultimately not reassuring but disturbing – even 'excruciating'. Alternatively, perhaps additionally, it might be said that serious art, even now, need not necessarily be dedicated to exploring totally new states of mind. Certainly in the past it has not always done so.

But if I suggest that Miss Sontag avoids such questions, this is only a way of asking for more. Her piece on film and theatre probably and the article on Godard possibly, are the best things written on these subjects – criticism of a range, seriousness and subtlety rarely found in this country. What is so impressive about this book is the unity of Miss Sontag's concerns; her writing on the cinema is neither a hermetic academic activity nor a collection of unrelated *aperçues*.

EDWARD BUSCOMBE

Edward Buscombe is a member of the BFI lecture panel.